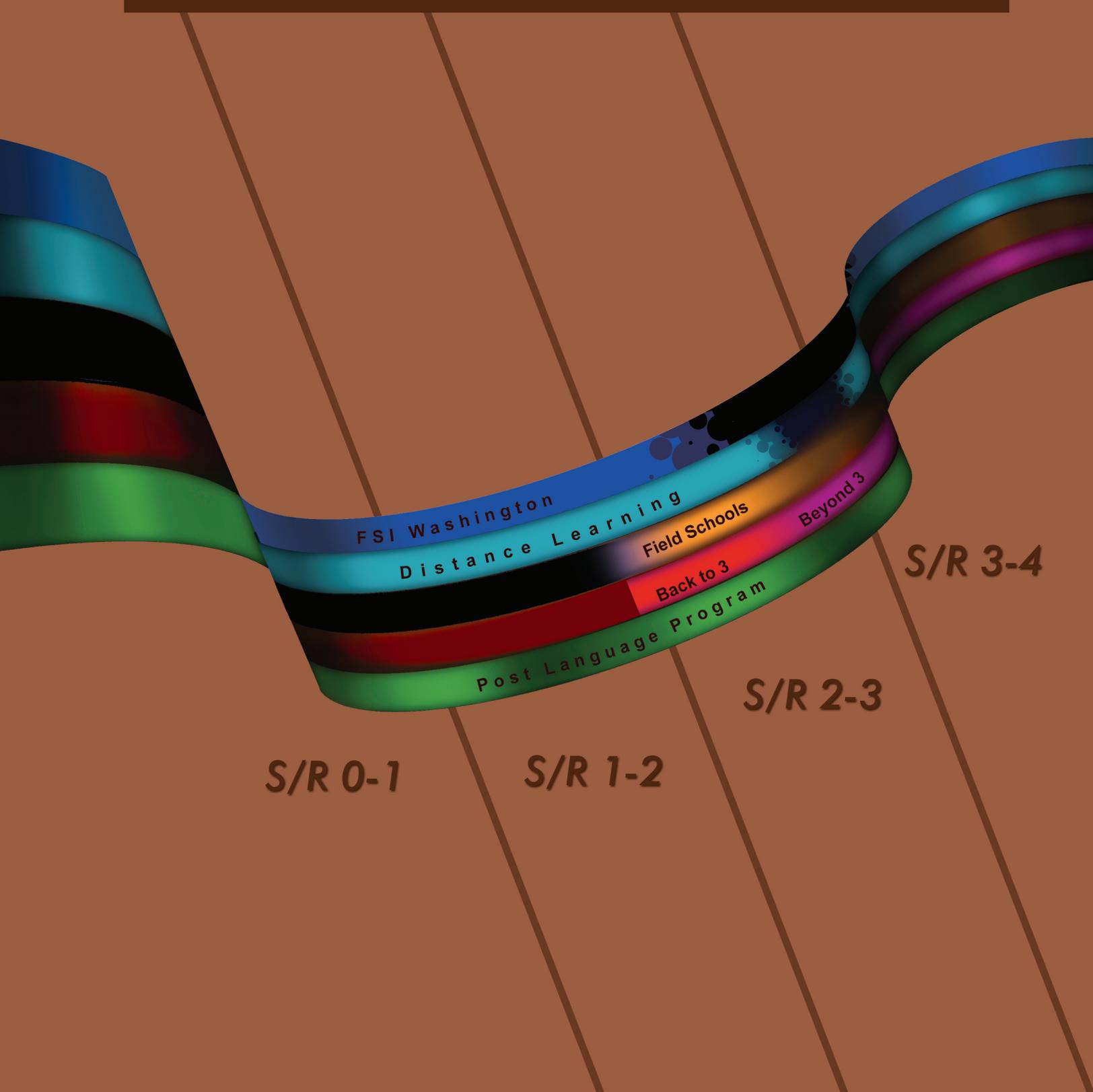




Language Continuum

GEORGE P. SHULTZ NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRAINING CENTER ♦ SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE STUDIES ♦ FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE ♦ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE





A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

Secretary Powell has called our diplomatic personnel “America’s first line of offense.” Our overarching goal, therefore, is to get the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time to carry out America’s foreign policy. One of the skills that is the hallmark of effective diplomacy is the ability to use a foreign language to carry out our responsibilities. In the wake of the watershed events of September 11, 2001, the public and the United States Government have grown painfully aware of the need for greater foreign language fluency. Repeatedly, we see compelling evidence of the critical role of language in the execution of the President’s agenda and our international responsibilities. This Language Continuum outlines a strategic plan or roadmap for pursuing a career-long integrated approach that provides guidance for individuals, bureaus, and posts to realize the goal of growing a cadre of employees with advanced language capabilities.

The Continuum results from a collaboration involving many talented and insightful individuals from the regional bureaus and their posts, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Foreign Service Institute’s School of Language Studies. They are the ones who peered ahead and saw beyond the *status quo* to weave the foreign language threads into the fabric of a Foreign Service career and assignment path.

The Continuum attempts to pull together in a coherent fashion numerous formal and informal language learning options that have existed as independent elements. It provides an overview of how these separate strands can be expanded and woven together to enhance the capacities of individuals to acquire, maintain and use language at high levels of effectiveness to make America’s case to the world and better understand the perspectives of others.

I invite the foreign affairs community—including family members—to use this document to pursue vigorously the opportunities available, to build high-level competency in foreign languages, and to use that competency to strengthen their careers, the Foreign Service, and the United States of America.

FSI’s School of Language Studies is pleased to help build the cadres of proficient language users that the Department and the nation need, and we look forward to working with you to that end.

Katherine H. Peterson
Director, Foreign Service Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Language Continuum is intended for Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Specialists and eligible family members to help plan a career-long integrated approach to language learning and use in order to build the advanced language cadres that the Department and the nation need. The Language Continuum describes the opportunities available for State Department employees (and eligible family members on a space-available basis) to pursue a ‘career’ in which language learning is seen as a continuous journey, as opposed to a one-off training event. Most importantly, in collaboration with the Bureau of Human Resources, bureaus and posts, FSI seeks to develop employees who are able to competently and credibly convey America’s message to often skeptical foreign audiences to understand the perspectives of our interlocutors and to advance U.S. policy goals and interests abroad.

The Continuum provides an overview of language learning opportunities and structures them in a framework that allows for continuity among delivery options:

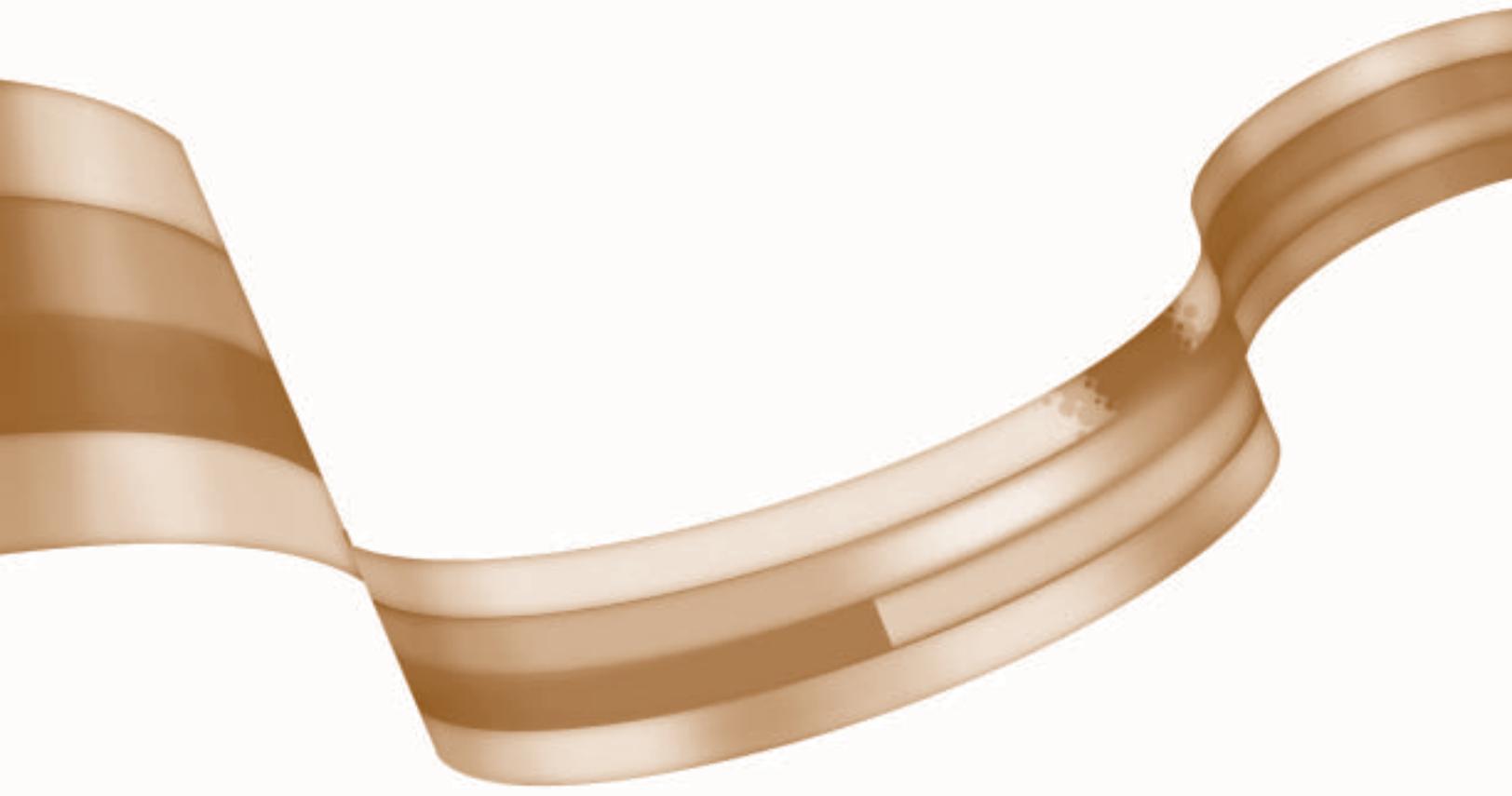
- full-time training at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C.;
- field school programs in Seoul, Taipei, Tunis and Yokohama and a contract program in Beijing;
- post language programs for acquisition and maintenance;
- advanced study at select overseas institutions; and
- distance language learning courses.

The Continuum:

- provides a notional ‘roadmap’ for employees at different stages in their careers (at entry, mid, and senior-level) and is intended to guide the language learner through multiple training opportunities;
- outlines a strategic plan for achieving the language competency needed for tenuring and for promotion to the senior level, with the goal of reaching high-level proficiencies in at least two languages before reaching the senior threshold;
- describes available resources beyond the normal FSI course offerings, including post language programs, distance language learning, multimedia self-study products, study at select overseas institutions, and the Language Learning Consultation Service;

- addresses the language training needs of eligible family members; and
- provides learning tips and ways to foster more effective language proficiency and use.

The School of Language Studies (SLS) offers training in over 60 languages from beginner to advanced levels at FSI/Washington. It also offers intermediate and advanced level training programs overseas in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean (so-called 'superhard' languages), and in-country "transition immersions" in selected languages. Of the total number of languages taught, many are "incentive languages," associated with monetary bonuses for those who attain high levels of proficiency and use and/or improve their skills in those languages in their work abroad. In addition, SLS offers early morning classes for those living in the Washington, D.C. area, "Beyond-3" training opportunities, independent study, and distance language learning. The Language Learning Consultation Service is available to employees to help them enhance their own learning skills and strategies. FSI and the regional bureaus independently fund post language programs, but work collaboratively to help posts establish programs to meet the needs of all segments of their populations. END SUMMARY.



INTRODUCTION

Language Continuum

The Language Continuum is a strategic plan for pursuing a career-long integrated approach to developing cadres of Department employees with advanced language capabilities. The Continuum weaves together language training offered by FSI/Washington, overseas field schools, the range of post language and distance learning programs worldwide, and “Beyond-3” language partnerships with select educational institutions overseas. It offers a variety of approaches to follow and outlines an integrated notional “roadmap” through training and multiple assignments for individual language learners to acquire, maintain, and improve their language skills to a high level of proficiency.

Background

The Department of State stipulates that the ability to use a foreign language to conduct the business of the United States is the hallmark of the successful Foreign Service Officer, and it regards the fostering of that ability as a matter of official policy.

3 FAM 2731.3 Policy

(TL:PER-428; 10-30-2001)

(Applies to State Foreign Service Officers only)

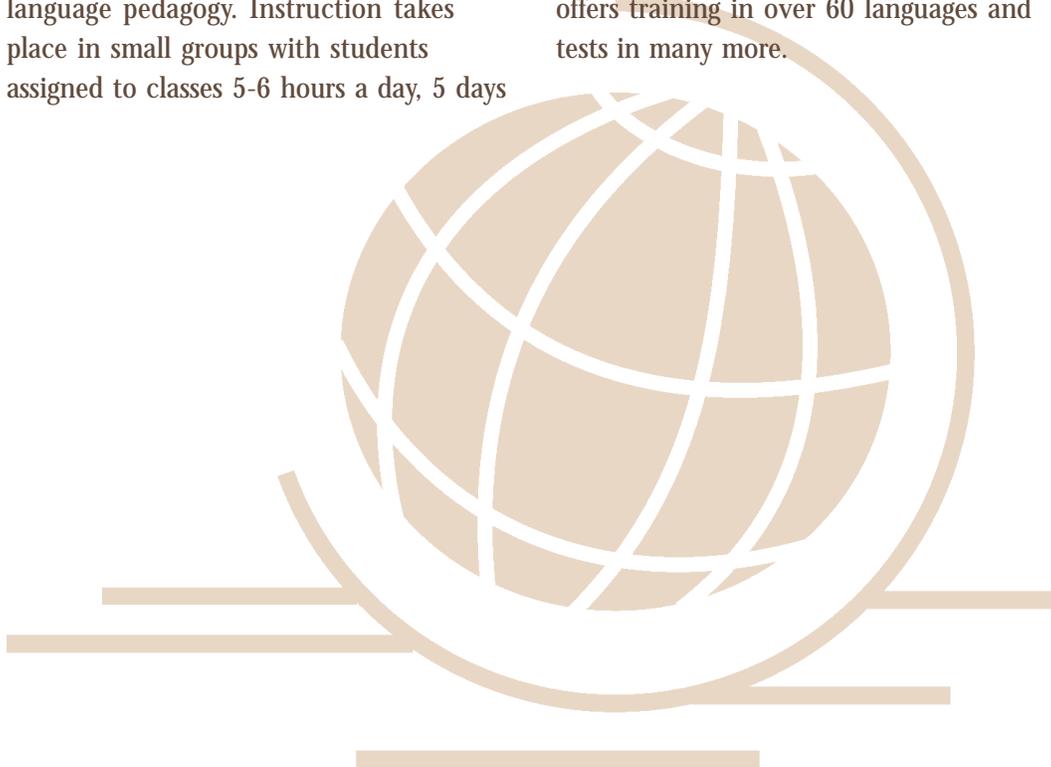
- a. The Department’s objective is that each officer fulfills the language requirements of each position to which he or she is assigned and, before reaching the senior level, be able to use two foreign languages at a general professional proficiency level of S-3/R-3.¹
- b. A normal sequence of assignments, including assignments to language-designated positions (LDPs), will usually provide each officer with opportunities, through job-related language training, to meet the two-language objective of the Department prior to reaching the senior level. Language training is provided, as necessary, to help employees meet the requirements of LDPs.

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI), the training arm of the Department of State, provides training for Foreign Service and Civil Service employees and eligible family members in administration,

¹ For a description of Language Skill Levels, please refer to the Appendices.

leadership and management, professional tradecraft and area studies, information technology and foreign languages. The School of Language Studies trains Department of State and other U.S. Government employees assigned to U.S. missions overseas in the language of the country of their assignments. The School of Language Studies employs native speakers as Language and Culture Instructors (LCI) and a team of Language Training Supervisors (LTS) and Curriculum Specialists that includes several of the nation's experts in foreign language pedagogy. Instruction takes place in small groups with students assigned to classes 5-6 hours a day, 5 days

a week and 2-3 hours daily on out-of-class assignments. Full-time advanced language training in superhard languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean) is offered at FSI field schools and programs overseas. Distance Learning and Self-Study programs are also offered to support the acquisition, maintenance and strengthening of language skills. Part-time language training at overseas missions is conducted under the auspices of the post language program with funding from FSI as well as regional bureaus. The School of Language Studies offers training in over 60 languages and tests in many more.



LANGUAGE SEQUENCE

Entry-level

3 FAM 2246.6 Foreign Language

Proficiency

(TL: PER-397; 4-06-2001) (Applies to State Foreign Service Officers only)

- a. No officer candidate may be commissioned until the candidate has demonstrated a proficiency in at least one foreign language, as prescribed in 3 FAM 2730. However, in appropriate cases, the board may render a favorable tenure decision conditional upon subsequent achievement of the prescribed language rating before the expiration of candidate status. In such cases, the board's action will not take effect until the required language rating is achieved. Candidates who fail to satisfy language probation requirements by the end of their five year limited appointment will be separated from the Service.

Candidates who are still on language probation and who have been recommended for tenure may be recommended for promotion by a selection board. If so, they will not receive such promotion unless they satisfy their language requirement prior to the convening of the next selection



board. If the officer is not off language probation prior to the convening of the next board, the officer will re compete for promotion.

Per the FAM citation above, new Foreign Service Generalists must meet their language probation requirement by achieving S-2/R-0 in a superhard language, S-2/R-2 in a hard language or a S-3/R-3 in a world language.² When assigned to posts where the language is on the "Incentive" list,³ Junior Officers not at the S-3/R-3 level often seek to improve their proficiency in order to qualify for Language Incentive Pay. Some Junior Officers with basic skills in certain superhard languages may be assigned to study at one of the field school programs.

² For a description of Language Skill Levels and estimated length of training required, please refer to the Appendix.

³ For a list of Incentive Languages, please see 3 FAM 3170 and 3 FAH-1 H-3170.

Upon entering the Foreign Service and, ideally, following other training (the A-100 orientation program, professional tradecraft and other training, although this is not always practicable) employees typically study the language of the country of their assignment. Depending on existing knowledge of the language, they will be enrolled in beginner or non-beginner classes. Entry-Level students usually take the “Basic” course, which is 23, 24, 36 or 44 weeks in duration, depending on the difficulty of the language. However, not all untenured officers can expect to receive 44 weeks of language training in hard or superhard languages due to other demands on their initial training time before tenure. Longer training durations may be available to second-tour Junior Officers who have not already received substantial language training for an initial assignment and whose other Washington training commitments permit, or who are assigned to training at an FSI field school or at their post of assignment. When appropriate, some personnel may take the Familiarization and Short Term (FAST) courses of seven or eight weeks duration. FAST courses are designed for employees and eligible family members who do not have a specific language proficiency requirement and provide a ‘survival’ or courtesy level of language proficiency.

Mid-level

Many mid-level employees will have attained professional (S-3/R-3) proficiency in a foreign language and

may seek to acquire proficiency in one or more additional languages; some may need to undertake further training to attain the S-3/R-3 level in a hard or superhard language previously studied. Others may seek to progress to advanced (Level 4) proficiency in a language in connection with a (repeat) tour in a language area. FSI field school programs, short-term refresher (“Back-to-3”) and long-term “Beyond-3” training initiatives at FSI/Washington or via FSI field programs and partnerships with regional educational institutions overseas can assist employees to reach an advanced level of proficiency. Mid-level employees and tenured Junior Officers may:

- begin Basic training in a new language (based on their assignment),
- attend two years of language training in superhard languages with the second year overseas (contingent upon an onward assignment),
- seek “Beyond-3” training opportunities (linked to the next assignment),
- seek short-term refresher (“Back-to-3”) training before a new assignment or start of advanced “Beyond-3” training,
- enroll in distance learning maintenance programs, or
- self-direct their continued language enhancement.

Mid-level Foreign Service Officers must have achieved a S-3/R-3 level in at least one language to be eligible for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. Tenured Foreign Service Generalists at grades FO-02, FO-03, and FO-04 can bid on two years (88 weeks) of Arabic and

Chinese language training. In addition, provision exists for two officers each year to commence such training without a specific onward assignment, though such assignment is usually made during the course of training, and, in any event, they will be required to serve upon completion of training at a post where the language can be used. Also the “out-year world language program” offers tenured mid-career employees an opportunity (and sufficient time) to learn a world language, ultimately expanding the number of posts for which they can compete later.⁴

Senior-level

While one language at the S-3/R-3 level is required to cross the senior threshold, the Department’s objective is for all officers to fulfill the language requirements of each position to which they are assigned and be able to use two foreign languages at a general professional level of S-3/R-3 before they reach the senior level. The ultimate goal is to effectively communicate with the host government and society. While Public Diplomacy skills in a foreign language are important throughout an employee’s career, they are particularly so at senior levels, when employees either have greater opportunity or the obligation to engage in public speaking and other public diplomacy activities. This is particularly significant for those national security-critical languages where getting America’s message across to often skeptical, if not hostile, foreign audiences is crucial to defending and

advancing key U.S. national interests and goals. The charts on pages 7-10 depict the possible training opportunities for employees at the entry, mid, and senior levels. Some of the courses appear under all three levels since employees may start learning a new language at any stage of their careers. However, there are particular training opportunities that are typically tied to a certain career level.

Notional Language Learning Career Scenarios

One notional example of a language training and assignment career path from entry through senior level for an officer seeking to achieve an advanced level of proficiency (level 4) in a superhard language such as Arabic would be to take up to 44 weeks of Basic Arabic at FSI/Washington after completing A-100 orientation and tradecraft training. Following a consular or rotational assignment at an Arabic-speaking post, a normal subsequent assignment would be to a posting elsewhere in the world (or occasionally in Washington) to provide broader geographic and/or functional experience for tenuring evaluation. While on non-Arabic assignments, employees can continue to work on their language skills via Distance Learning, Post Language Programs or Early Morning classes if in Washington.

After tenuring, an officer may bid on an assignment requiring a S-3/R-3 in Arabic which would lead to a second year of Arabic language training at the FSI field

⁴ See 2001 State 151934 for details on Arabic, and 2001 State 165022 for details on Chinese and 2003 State 263523 for the Out-year World Language Program (in Appendices).

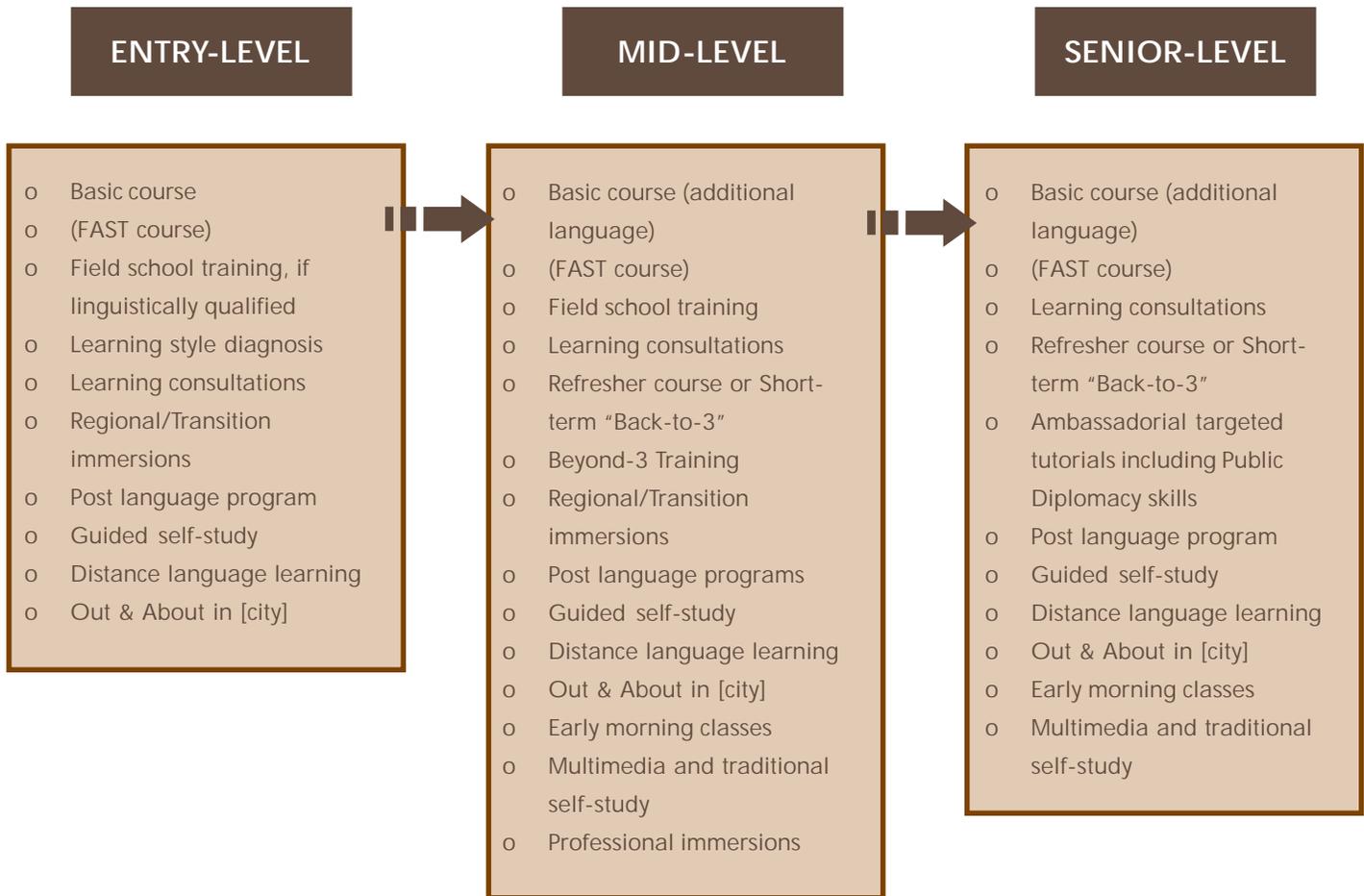
school in Tunis or possibly at another regional educational institution in preparation for further Arabic-speaking assignments at the mid-level. Subsequently, if an employee and the bureau agree, more advanced language training to the “Beyond-3” level may be considered for up to a year of immersion study at appropriate institutions in the region. Such training requires a current 3/3 by its start and would be tied to an assignment to a language-designated position, followed by other assignments in NEA in preparation for senior-level responsibilities. These assignments should be complemented by non-NEA postings elsewhere in the world and Washington to provide the broad range of experience and expertise needed to compete at the senior level.

Another notional example for a hard language such as Russian would be to take either the full 44-week Basic course to attain a S-3/R-3 or up to 36 weeks of training at FSI/Washington (normally attaining a S-2/R-2) which could then be followed by up to four weeks of “transition immersion” at a contract facility in Russia or elsewhere prior to or after reporting for duty. An officer could continue to work on language skills development via Distance Learning or Post Language Program offerings while at post and, via Distance Learning, could

maintain Russian skills while serving in subsequent non-Russian speaking assignments. Short-term and advanced refresher or “Beyond-3” (for those with a current 3/3) Russian training at FSI/Washington would be a possibility in preparation for subsequent Russian-language postings. Again, assignments to Russian-speaking posts would be complemented by assignments elsewhere in the world or Washington to provide that broader experience required at the senior level.

Employees who begin in the Service studying a world language such as Spanish or French would normally receive up to 23/24 weeks of language training at FSI, achieving a S-3/R-3 before reporting to post. They could then use Post Language Program offerings, local immersions and Distance Learning courses to maintain or improve their language skills. Later refresher and advanced training at FSI, usually offered during the summer months, can assist students in moving towards the S-4/R-4 level.

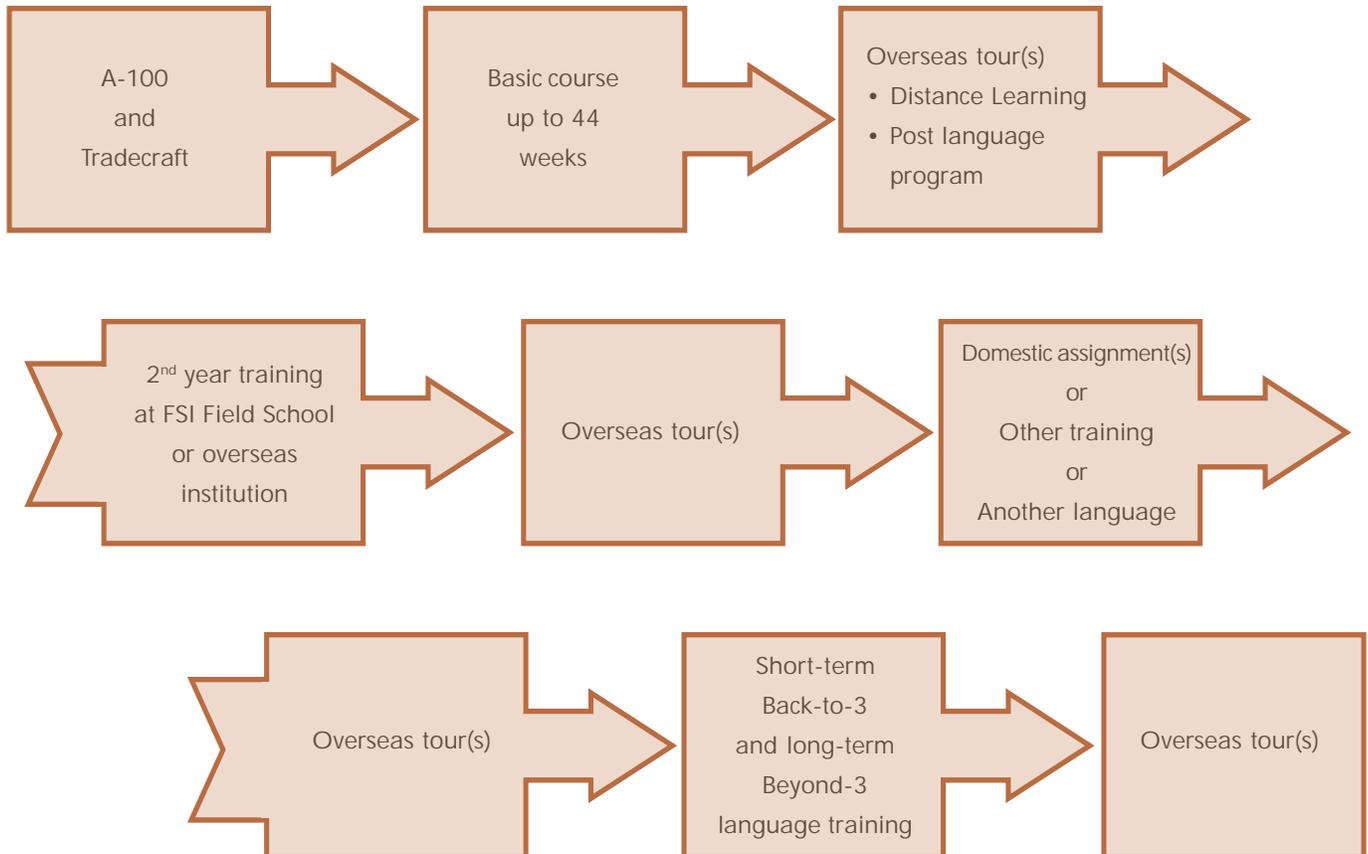
Some combination of the above, as well as the out-year world language program for tenured mid-career employees, may be used in acquiring the advanced proficiency in two languages desired for the senior level.



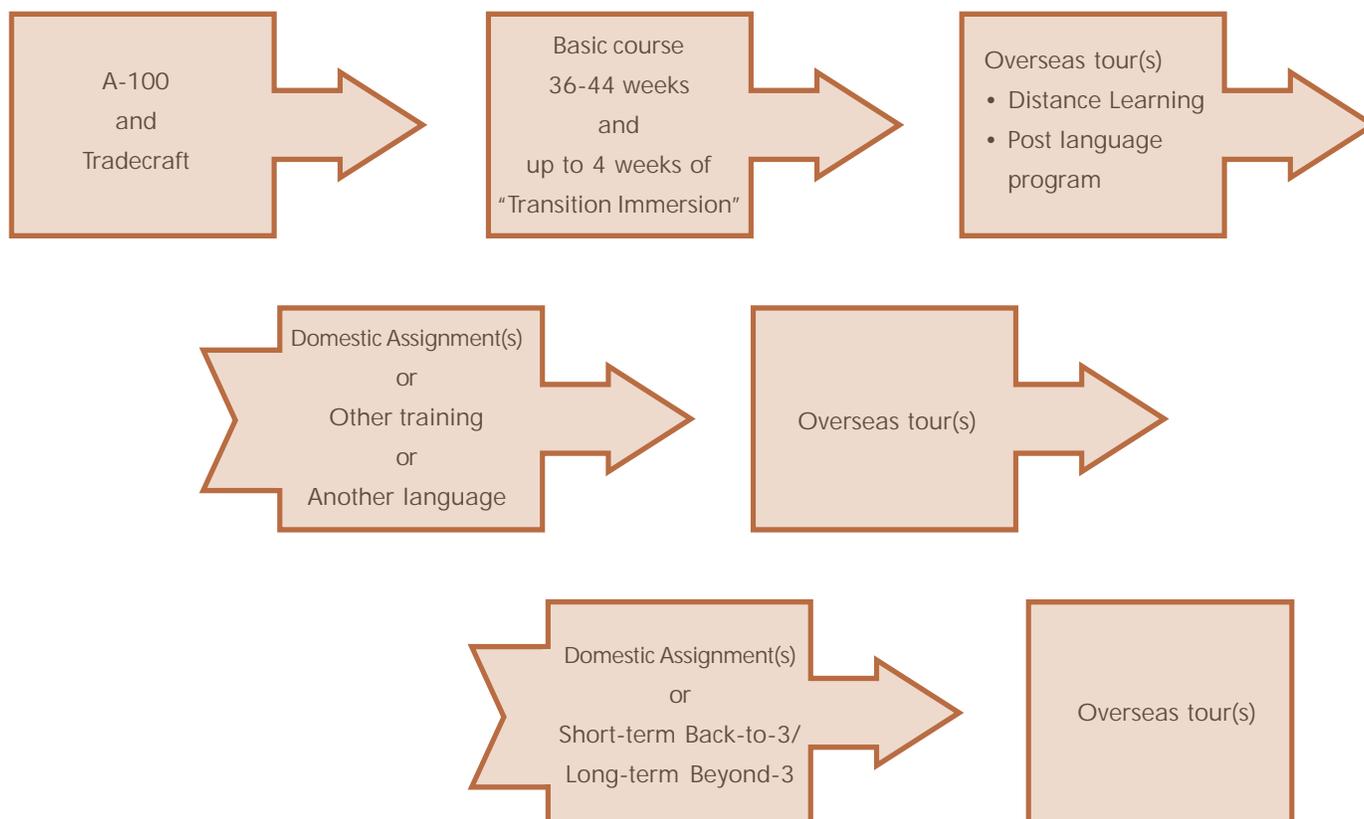
Eligible Family Members can follow a somewhat similar Language Continuum approach in building their language skills.



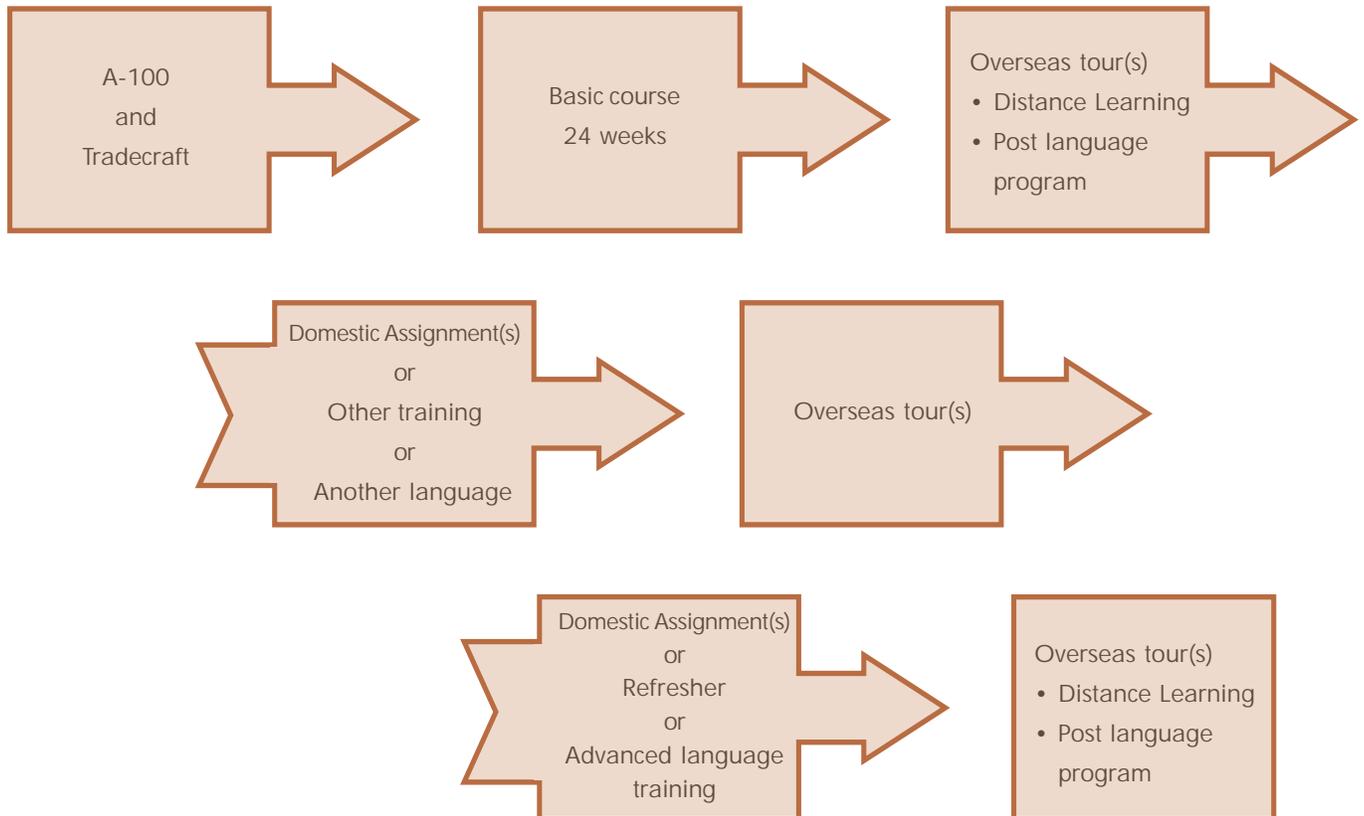
**Notional Example of Language Training
and Assignment Career Path**
To Achieve Advanced Level in SUPERHARD Language



**Notional Example of Language Training
and Assignment Career Path**
To Achieve Advanced Level in HARD Language



**Notional Example of Language Training
and Assignment Career Path
To Achieve Advanced Level in World Language**



SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

FULL-TIME COURSES

Basic Courses

Basic courses are offered in over 60 languages. They are designed to enable learners to develop general language proficiency as well as specific communicative competencies required for their work. Most courses consist of an extensive core curriculum of speaking, reading, and listening practice, with accommodation to individuals' jobs and learning styles. They involve a mix of live instruction in small groups, study guidance, educational technology support, homework, and extramural activities. The best available textbooks and reference materials are used and, where available, online and web-based resources.

Many basic courses make use of special scheduling and teaching activities aimed at accelerating and personalizing the training experience. The Accelerated Personalized Training (APT) model is characterized by a higher degree of involvement by learners in determining how best to prepare for their linguistic tasks overseas, how to make the most efficient use of their abilities and language study time, and how to continue language learning after formal classroom training.

Advanced area studies is an integral part of the program in order to enhance understanding of the country of assignment, its role in the region and the international system, and its relationship with the United States.

Enrollment durations vary for the Basic courses, since shorter enrollments are appropriate for non-beginners. In other cases, additional time may be required to meet the desired end-of-training proficiency level.

Professional Seminars

While "proficiency" is defined as a general ability to use a language in a wide variety of situations and progressively approximate the skills of native speakers, the reality for most Foreign Affairs language learners is that they need to perform language tasks at a more sophisticated level in the special domains in which they function on the job. Most Basic language training, therefore, includes intensive practice in a wide variety of Foreign Service functional areas, individualized for students' impending assignments, in order to enhance language "trecraft" facility. These "professional seminars" are developed and modified by FSI staff in consultation with individual students, former students, bureaus and

posts. They address, but are not limited to, consular, economic, commercial, political, management and administration, security, political-military, foreign assistance, office management, and public diplomacy communications.

FAST Courses

The Familiarization & Short-term Training (FAST) courses are designed for beginners with a training opportunity of two months or less. As such, FAST courses are intended for employees going into non-language designated but language preferred positions where some language is useful or necessary, as well as for eligible family members. Training is full-time and intensive. Lessons are derived from situations likely to be encountered overseas in a particular locale. FAST training is preparation for getting things done despite limited linguistic skills, by making use of essential language and cultural knowledge. Because these courses are very brief, the aim is situational readiness rather than proficiency in reading and speaking. Learners typically learn to express needs, obtain services, get information, deal with emergencies and engage in everyday conversation in the target language. End-of-training tests are voluntary.

Intermediate and Advanced Overseas Training Programs: Field Schools

FSI/SLS offers full-time language training programs at overseas field schools in Tunis

for Arabic, Yokohama for Japanese, Seoul for Korean, and for Chinese at Taipei and a small, contract program in Beijing. These course offerings enable students to progress from S-2/R-2 to S-3/R-3 level proficiency, generally as a second-year follow-on to a Washington-based first-year program. “Beyond-3” training is also offered by special arrangement and generally requires a tested 3/3 proficiency that is current (i.e., the FSI test score is no more than five years old) by the date advanced training starts. An advanced area studies component is included as well as field trips and special assignments to promote extramural language use. The advanced Chinese program is under the auspices of the American Institute of Taiwan (AIT) and China Educational Tours (CET) in Beijing, while the other programs are operated by FSI.

Transition Immersions

As funding and circumstances permit, and in partnership with bureaus, posts, and overseas educational institutions, learners may participate in specially arranged training during the period between completion of FSI/Washington training and reporting for duty at posts. Such “transition immersions” serve either as a substitute for some portion of the Washington training or as a complement or “topping-off” to enhance the learner’s ability to achieve a higher degree of facility in dealing with the local community and to increase the return on the training investment the Department has made.

Beyond-3 Training Opportunities

“Beyond-3” training options address the Department’s need to create a cadre of advanced language speakers, especially in national security-critical languages, who can competently and credibly discuss U.S. policy and goals with often skeptical foreign audiences, utilizing the media. The training seeks to provide students with a deeper understanding of the perspective and the culture of the country of their assignment in order to more effectively promote U.S. interests and objectives.

In partnership with regional bureaus, posts, and the Bureau of Human Resources, FSI may arrange training opportunities at select educational institutions overseas for individuals who have at the start of “Beyond-3” training a current S-3/R-3 score in a hard or superhard language deemed a priority. As noted above, such training may also take place at FSI-managed field schools for Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Beyond-3 training is occasionally available in certain languages in Washington. This training is available by special arrangement with FSI and assignment by the Bureau of Human Resources. Learning consultation services are available to help learners explore learning strategies appropriate to this level.

Public Diplomacy Skills in a Foreign Language

FSI language training seeks to meet the challenge of helping foreign affairs professionals more effectively convey American goals and policies around the world and to understand the perspectives of the countries and regions of their assignments. Public diplomacy skills are relevant to all employees and family members serving overseas. While professional seminars provide training in public speaking and media skills to senior officers and students going to public diplomacy assignments, basic public diplomacy skills are taught to all students throughout language training.

Refresher Courses

Short-term refresher courses are special programs of varying lengths offered in the summer in a number of languages. Refresher training aims at helping individuals refresh and sharpen their language skills. Learners work with profession or job-related materials to brush up their proficiency. A pre-training evaluation, arranged directly with the Language Training Supervisor, is required prior to admission. In addition to the intensive summer refresher training at FSI, as resources and circumstances permit, FSI may facilitate “Back-to-3” training in select overseas immersion settings.

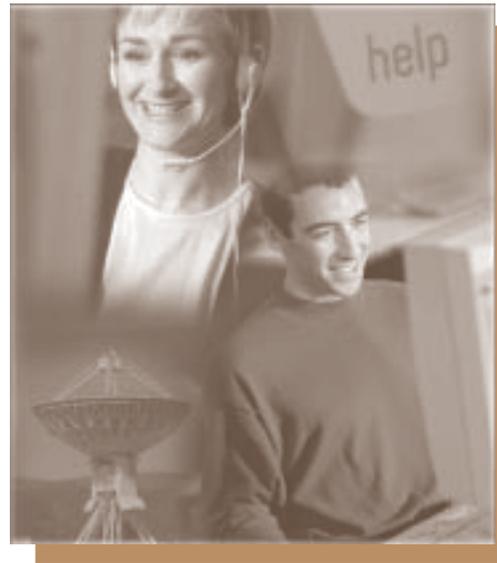
RESOURCES AND OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Distance Language Learning

SLS offers distance language learning courses for beginners to advanced learners. These courses make it possible to begin or continue language study anywhere in the world. The content is similar to traditional language classes, and students participate through a variety of interactive exercises via computer. The courses are mentored by FSI's Language and Culture Instructors. Mentoring takes place privately and/or with groups of students, either via the bulletin board or e-mail. The courses are offered in a passworded area of the Internet, so employees and family members can conveniently log in to the courses at any time from anywhere.

The *Express Language Familiarization Course* provides basic familiarization with the language and culture of the host country to prepare the learner to get things done despite limited linguistic skills or previous exposure.

The *Introductory Language Course* teaches the basic language structure and grammar together with high frequency vocabulary used in daily life to allow participants to learn and read simple texts and dialogues and to engage in



communication at the elementary proficiency level. *The Reading Maintenance Course* maintains and sharpens reading skills. Participants need to have obtained a R-3 level prior to taking this course (R-2 level or higher in Arabic and Chinese).

Out & About in [city] Series

The *Out & About in [city]* series is an interactive multimedia program for language recognition that introduces learners to the local environment. The software is distributed on CD-ROM and is city-specific. The series focuses on cities where the written language is complex. The *Out & About* series is an

excellent tool for new arrivals at post to familiarize themselves with the language and to learn phrases to get “out and about” in their new environment. The programs feature vocabulary and simple exercises built around the topics of transportation, eating out, shopping, and other everyday activities and are available for Athens, Bangkok, Beijing, Cairo, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Tokyo with additional titles under development for Ankara, Istanbul, Seoul, and other select cities. For a list of available cities and to request a copy of any of these CD-ROMs, please send an e-mail to OnlineLanguage@state.gov or call (703)-302-6858.



Early Morning Classes

Early Morning classes are offered to employees or eligible family members who have or will have a job-related need for language proficiency but who are not able to enroll in full-time language training. Early Morning classes are offered in two 17-week semesters in September and February in a number of languages. Languages available in any

given session are announced by Department Notice in advance of each offering. For further information please call (703)-302-7242.

Independent Study

Employees or family members who are unable to commit to a regular schedule of language training may wish to consider a language self-study program.

The Traditional Self-Study programs provide self-study materials in selected languages based on textbooks and audio-media that are or have been used in FSI classes. Although the materials provided by FSI are designed for classroom use, they may benefit the motivated self-study student. Potential students should contact the appropriate Language Training Supervisor for advice regarding text selections. Please call the Office of Multimedia and Library Services at (703)-302-7153 to inquire about obtaining materials or search for materials on FSIWeb at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/plp/materials.asp>. You may also type “Language Self Study” into the search function on the website. Registered students receive a copy of the textbook and are authorized to copy the audiotapes or obtain the CDs corresponding to the textbook in the FSI cassette duplication facility in Arlington, VA.

Multimedia Self-Study language programs provide registered individuals with access to materials in a given language, including videotapes, videodiscs, multimedia instructional programs, and

other learning resources. FSI's Multimedia and Library Services staff provides technical support. Please call the Office of Multimedia and Library Services at (703)-302-7153 regarding current materials available in the Multimedia Center. The range of resources varies considerably from language to language.

Guided Study: Neither Traditional nor Multimedia Self-Study involves direct teacher contact. Employees may consult with the appropriate Language Training Supervisor about the possibility of intermittent tutorial guidance. At posts, Post Language Officers may be able to make instructor time available for such assistance.

Learning Style Diagnosis and Learning Consultation:

Learning how to learn and autonomous, self-directed learning

Students are ultimately responsible for their own learning, even though there is a great deal that can be achieved in a classroom with a teacher. This is even more evident when students leave the classroom for the workplace where active support by post management is critical. However, even the best post language program cannot provide everything a learner needs for continuing development of language and culture skills. The ability to manage and self-direct one's learning is thus a vital skill; from the beginning of their language

studies, learners can build their skills in finding and participating in foreign language activities, assessing their own learning needs, planning and evaluating their learning, and seeking help and other resources as needed.

The School of Language Studies has been studying learner differences to assist student self-direction since the early 1990s, producing greater insight into how to enhance learners' self-knowledge and teachers' understanding of how students vary in learning style and then how to apply this knowledge to increase learning effectiveness. The results of the research have been institutionalized in the Language Learning Consultation Service, which serves all students on a voluntary and confidential basis.

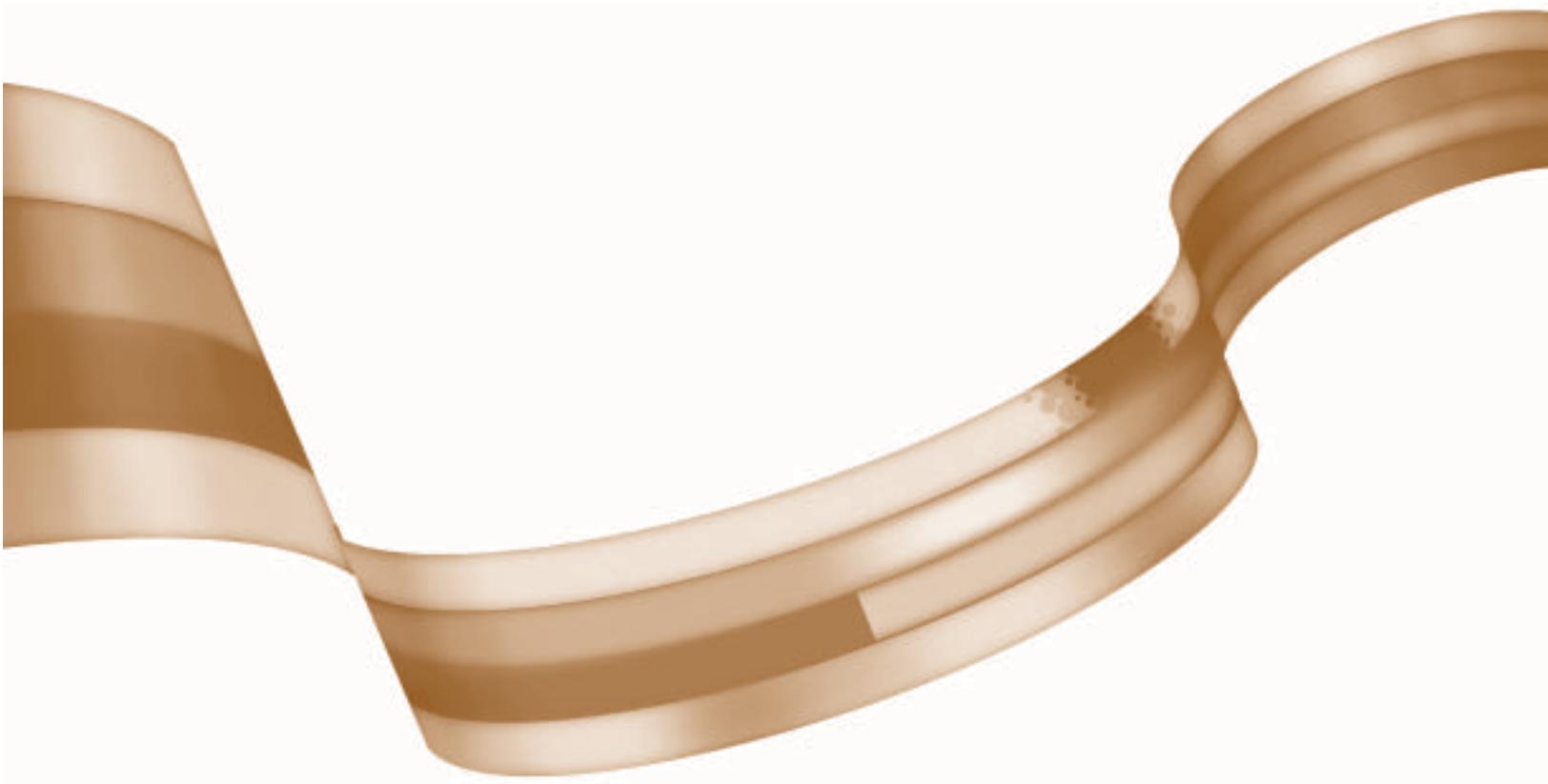
The Language Learning Consultation Service develops materials to support continued learning in the field, with or without a formal teacher or classroom. Counselors are prepared to discuss learning strategies and self-directed learning with learners and teachers, on a pre-departure basis and at post through bulletin boards and other electronic means.

On the first day of full-time training, students are invited to complete a set of questionnaires. They attend a group session to receive their results and to learn more about the meaning of the questionnaires in general. Students are then encouraged to schedule an individual session with a counselor to discuss what their results mean for them

personally. Students may return for follow-up sessions with a counselor at any time throughout their training. They are also encouraged to sign up for a pre-departure consultation to discuss strategies for continued progress in the target language at post and to obtain a copy of the booklet “Language Learning after the Classroom.”

Most language sections have designated at least one *Learning Consultant* who attends the initial individual session with the student. The Learning Consultant is

a supervisor or an experienced teacher who has knowledge about learning and teaching styles and their implications for the classroom. The Learning Consultant follows up with the student by helping the learner identify weaknesses and draw on strengths to make the most efficient and effective use of time and effort during training. (Call 703-302-7250 to schedule an appointment.)



LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AT POST

Post Language Programs

FSI encourages U.S. missions overseas to establish effective language programs and is prepared to offer specific guidance and pedagogical advice. Traditional Post Language Programs (PLP) are funded by the regional bureaus and their posts, and general guidance and priorities are specified in the FAH. Such programs are not mandatory, and post management decides whether and what type of program to establish. These PLPs are usually designed to serve the needs of Foreign Service Generalists in language designated positions (LDP) to attain or maintain their LDP goals, usually with instruction taking place on a small class or individual basis, several times a week, in a classroom-type setting in embassy facilities. Enrollments in traditional post language programs have frequently been constrained by funding limitations. Therefore, many traditional post language programs have not usually taught the range of communicative language skills needed by those who have little or no language training prior to arrival at post.

Post Language Program Initiative – Continuing Training and Testing

Congress has mandated that the State Department provide “continuing language education” at posts and expand participation to include specifically Marine Security Guards (MSGs), Foreign Service Specialists and eligible family members, as well as FSO Generalists. Using congressionally-earmarked funding, SLS manages a direct funding process whereby posts world-wide compete for awards by submitting proposals that outline their language training plans for a given fiscal year. Guidance to posts stipulates the introduction of communicative teaching approaches.

Post language programs vary in the types of training they provide. They most frequently offer beginner or survival courses for those who have not received language training and to enable those who have received language training to develop further their day-to-day language skills. Some posts offer language immersion programs for non-beginners for a period of one or more weeks to reinforce their language skills

or to work on job-related language needs. In addition, many posts have language labs equipped with multimedia computers and interactive software and sponsor a lending library to assist students in maintaining and improving their language skills.

In addition, FSI has developed a range of distance language learning (online and via CD-ROM) and other multimedia products to assist language learners overseas:

- The *Out and About in [city]* series to assist those with little or no language training to navigate select foreign environments (see page 14);
- Express Course offerings (equivalent to Familiarization and Short Term [FAST] courses taught at FSI/Washington);
- An Introductory Korean Course (modeled on the Basic Korean Course taught at FSI); and
- Reading Maintenance courses to assist those at the R-3 level to maintain their reading skills in such languages as Russian, Polish, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese and Arabic at the 2 level.

“Continuing Training” is the umbrella term for the direct funding program and these distance language learning courses and self-study programs. Continuing Training personnel work closely within the Language School and with other FSI elements to design, develop and implement distance language learning courses and to provide expert guidance on PLP proposals. Through an online

discussion forum for Post Language Officers, “PLP Talk,” it also provides a worldwide forum for exchanging information, advice, and best practices to enhance the quality, sustainability, and innovativeness of Post Language Programs.

Continuing Training operates within the office of *Continuing Training and Testing*, which is responsible for language proficiency testing and tester training in addition to Continuing Training activities.

FSI’s oral and reading proficiency test is the only official test for the purposes of all language-related personnel matters, i.e., probation, language incentive bonuses, LDP compliance, and senior-threshold. Most language testing is done in Washington; however, tests may be requested while an employee is serving abroad. Once they have been officially requested by cable to FSI, these tests are administered at posts under the proctorship of a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, and the tapes (audio or video) are sent back to Washington for scoring. There is also a growing capability to use digital video-conferencing to conduct tests at posts directly from FSI/Washington. Tests may be repeated after an interval of either six months or one hundred hours of formal language instruction. There is an official mechanism for appealing test results; requests for review are made in writing to the Language Testing Unit at FSI/Washington.

Participation in Post Language Programs

Prior to leaving Washington, D.C. for a new post, employees and their family members can schedule an appointment with the Language Learning Consultation Service (see pages 16-17) and with Continuing Training (703-302-6771 or FSICTT@state.gov) to discuss what resources might be available to them for language study at post. Not all posts have formal language programs, however, employees can also request self-study language materials from FSI (see page 15). Upon arrival at post, employees and eligible family members may contact the Post Language Officer to discuss their training needs.

FSI provides its graduates with a booklet, "Language Learning after the Classroom," to guide continuing learning activities. It is important that, while on assignment, employees strive to maintain and improve their foreign language skills and use these skills to enhance job performance and quality of life as well as to preserve the return on the substantial investment that they and the Department have made in the language learning process. While opportunities are usually plentiful to immerse oneself in the local language and culture, it requires commitment from the language learner to use the foreign language in as many situations as possible, even when English speakers are readily available.

Field Trips and Cultural Activities at Post

Many posts organize field trips and cultural activities as part of their language programs to provide exposure for participants to the host country's language in real life contexts and to practice everyday communications. Field trips may range from visiting the local market and practicing grocery shopping in the foreign language to attending various cultural activities to better understand local customs and habits. All activities are conducted in the local language, and participants receive instructor-led preparation sessions, in which they practice relevant vocabulary and phrases. The activities are usually followed by a debriefing session, for participants to build on their experiences.

Home-stays through the Post Language Programs

Some post language programs may have arrangements with individuals or commercial entities for learners to spend some amount of time in a family/home-stay setting. These arrangements vary from inexpensive to relatively expensive, and cost-sharing between learner and post is often possible. Home-stays are among the best vehicles for developing the comfort level needed to use the foreign language for social communication. The development of that ability is a critical element in developing the confidence to use the language in the professional as well as everyday context.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE –

How Not To Be a Perfect Stranger

Become Aware and Mindful of Local Culture

Culture and language are inseparable, two sides of the same coin. No one can truly understand another culture without learning the language, and full mastery of a language must include learning the culture of the people who speak it.

Language learners need to learn to interact with others in the new culture: the courtesies, gestures, and taboos.

Many of these are addressed in language learning materials and guidebooks. As proficiency increases, so must the depth of cultural understanding. Cultural values and attitudes are implied in idioms, humor, and proverbs. They form the basis for the assumptions underlying day-to-day interactions. Those learning the language need to become sensitized to the ways in which language and behavior reflect cultural attitudes in such areas as:

- gender roles,
- religious beliefs,
- perception of time,
- relationship of the individual vis-à-vis the group,
- power balances among groups and individuals,
- attitudes toward age, work, change, tradition, and conflict.

Learn to Benefit from the Environment

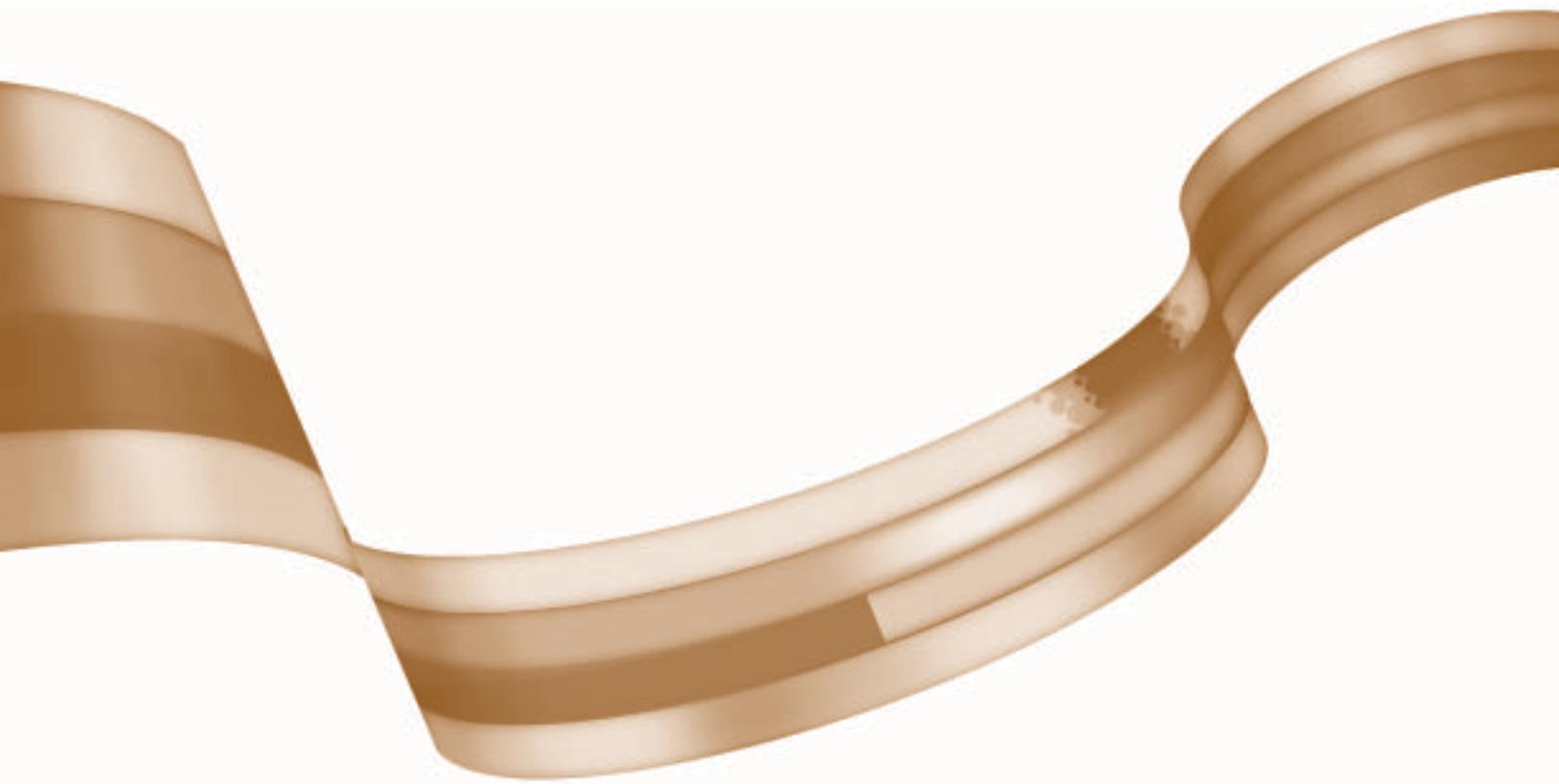
Classroom instruction or computer-assisted self-study is most effective in combination with language use in the community. Once at post, employees and others can take advantage of the resources that will help them to maintain and enhance their language skills.

Those who have become more proficient while at post suggest:

- watching one or two local television programs on a regular basis,
- joining a club with local members,
- learning a new skill or game or using an existing skill to facilitate local interaction,
- doing volunteer work in the local community,
- reading specific sections or articles in the local newspaper or news magazines on a regular basis,
- using FSN colleagues and local neighbors as language helpers,
- avoiding excessive reliance on interpreters or others,
- using to the maximum those language skills you have.

Communicating Across Cultures

To learn about cross-cultural communication, we recommend taking the “Communicating Across Cultures” (MQ 802) course, which is offered by FSI’s Transition Center. The course helps participants explore ways to bridge the cultural communication gap. It provides hands-on experience in adjusting to variations in cultural values and communication. Course participants learn to identify their own cultural values as well as those of others, personal reactions to cultural differences, and personal strengths that facilitate cross-cultural communication. The goal is to explore effective strategies for dealing with cultural diversity.



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Language Skills Descriptions

Speaking and Reading

(Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Description)

Preface

The following descriptions of proficiency levels 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 characterize spoken-language use. Each higher level implies control of the previous level's functions and accuracy. The designation 0+, 1+, 2+, etc., will be assigned when proficiency substantially exceeds one skill level but does not fully meet the criteria for the next level. The "plus-level" descriptions, therefore, are subsidiary to the "base-level" descriptions.

A skill level is assigned to a person through an authorized language examination. Examiners assign a level on a variety of performance criteria exemplified in the descriptive statements. Therefore, the examples given here illustrate, but do not exhaustively describe, either the skills a person may possess or situations in which he/she may function effectively.

Statements describing accuracy refer to typical stages in the development of competence in the most commonly taught languages in formal training programs. In other languages, emerging competence parallels these characterizations, but often with different details.

Unless otherwise specified, the term "native speaker" refers to educated native speakers of a standard dialect.

"Well-educated," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, does not necessarily imply formal higher education. However, in cultures where formal higher education is common, the language-use abilities of persons who have had such education is considered the standard. That is, such a person meets contemporary expectations for the formal, careful style of the language, as well as less formal common usage of the language.

These descriptions may be further specified by individual agencies to characterize those aspects of language performance that are of insufficient generality to be included here.

Speaking

S-0 NO PROFICIENCY

Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Has essentially no communicative ability.

S-0+ MEMORIZED PROFICIENCY

Able to satisfy immediate needs using rehearsed utterances. Shows little real autonomy of expression, flexibility, or spontaneity. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only with memorized utterances or formulae. Attempts at creating speech are usually unsuccessful.

Examples: The S-0+ 's vocabulary is usually limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Most utterances are telegraphic; that is, functors (linking words, markers, and the like) are omitted, confused, or distorted. An S-0+ can

usually differentiate most significant sounds when produced in isolation, but, when combined in words or groups of words, errors may be frequent. Even with repetition, communication is severely limited even with persons used to dealing with foreigners. Stress, intonation, tone, etc., are usually quite faulty.

S-1 ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY

Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics. A native speaker must often use slowed speech, repetition, paraphrase, or a combination of these to be understood by an S-1. Similarly, the native speaker must strain and employ real-world knowledge to understand even simple statements/questions from the S-1. An S-1 speaker has a functional, but limited proficiency. Misunderstandings are frequent, but the S-1 is able to ask for help and to verify comprehension of native speech in face-to-face interaction. The S-1 is unable to produce continuous discourse except with rehearsed material.

Examples: Structural accuracy is likely to be random or severely limited. Time concepts are vague. Vocabulary is inaccurate, and its range is very narrow. The S-1 often speaks with great difficulty. By repeating, such speakers can make themselves understood to native speakers who are in regular contact with foreigners, but there is little precision in the information conveyed. Needs, experience, or training may vary greatly from individual to individual; for example, S-1s may have encountered quite different

vocabulary areas. However, the S-1 can typically satisfy predictable, simple, personal and accommodation needs; can generally meet courtesy, introduction, and identification requirements; exchange greetings; elicit and provide, for example, predictable and skeletal biographical information. An S-1 might give information about business hours, explain routine procedures in a limited way, and state in a simple manner what actions will be taken. The S-1 is able to formulate some questions even in languages with complicated question constructions. Almost every utterance may be characterized by structural errors and errors in basic grammatical relations. Vocabulary is extremely limited and characteristically does not include modifiers. Pronunciation, stress, and intonation are generally poor, often heavily influenced by another language. Use of structure and vocabulary is highly imprecise.

S-1+ ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Can initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversation and satisfy limited social demands. The S-1+ may, however, have little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. The interlocutor is generally required to strain and employ real-world knowledge to understand even some simple speech. An S-1+ may hesitate and may have to change subjects due to lack of language resources. Range and control of the language are limited. Speech largely consists of a series of short, discrete utterances.

Examples: An S-1+ is able to satisfy most travel and accommodation needs and a limited range of social demands beyond exchanges of skeletal biographic information. Speaking ability may extend beyond immediate survival needs. Accuracy in basic grammatical relations is evident, although not consistent. May exhibit the common forms of verb tenses, for example, but may make frequent errors in formation and selection. While some structures are established, errors occur in more complex patterns. The S-1+ typically cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Person, space, and time references are often used incorrectly. Pronunciation is understandable to natives used to dealing with foreigners. Can combine most significant sounds with reasonable comprehensibility, but has difficulty in producing certain sounds in certain positions or in certain combinations. Speech will usually be labored. Frequently has to repeat utterances to be understood by the general public.

S-2 LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle routine work-related interactions that are limited in scope. In more complex and sophisticated work-related tasks, language usage generally disturbs the native speaker. Can handle with confidence, but not with facility, most normal high-frequency social conversational situations including

extensive, but casual, conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information. The S-2 can get the gist of most everyday conversations but has some difficulty understanding native speakers in situations that require specialized or sophisticated knowledge. The S-2's utterances are minimally cohesive. Linguistic structure is usually not very elaborate and not thoroughly controlled; errors are frequent. Vocabulary use is appropriate for high-frequency utterances, but unusual or imprecise elsewhere.

Examples: While these interactions will vary widely from individual to individual, an S-2 can typically ask and answer predictable questions in the workplace and give straightforward instructions to subordinates. Additionally, the S-2 can participate in personal and accommodation-type interactions with elaboration and facility; that is, can give and understand complicated, detailed, and extensive directions and make non-routine changes in travel and accommodation arrangements. Simple structures and basic grammatical relations are typically controlled; however, there are areas of weakness. In the commonly taught languages, these may be simple markings such as plurals, articles, linking words, and negatives or more complex structures such as tense/aspect usage, case morphology, passive constructions, word order, and embedding.

S-2+ LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Able to satisfy most work requirements with language usage that is often, but not always, acceptable and effective. An S-2+ shows considerable ability to communicate effectively on topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows a high degree of fluency and ease of speech, yet when under tension or pressure, the ability to use the language effectively may deteriorate.

Comprehension of normal native speech is typically nearly complete. An S-2+ may miss cultural and local references and may require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some ways. Native speakers often perceive the S-2+'s speech to contain awkward or inaccurate phrasing of ideas, mistaken time, space, and person references, or to be in some way inappropriate, if not strictly incorrect.

Examples: Typically an S-2+ can participate in most social, formal, and informal interactions; but limitations either in range of contexts, types of tasks, or level of accuracy hinder effectiveness. The S-2+ may be ill at ease with the use of the language either in social interaction or in speaking at length in professional contexts. An S-2+ is generally strong in either structural precision or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness or unevenness in one of the foregoing, or in pronunciation, occasionally results in miscommunication. Normally controls,

but cannot always easily produce general vocabulary. Discourse is often not cohesive.

S-3 GENERAL PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY

Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Nevertheless, an S-3's limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. Discourse is cohesive. An S-3 uses the language acceptably, but with some noticeable imperfections; yet, errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. An S-3 can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to convey meaning accurately. An S-3 speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs, and the implications of nuances and idiom may not be fully understood, the S-3 can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate; but stress, intonation, and pitch control may be faulty.

Examples: Can typically discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can use the language as part of normal professional duties such as answering objections,

clarifying points, justifying decisions, understanding the essence of challenges, stating and defending policy, conducting meetings, delivering briefings, or other extended, elaborate and informative monologues. Can reliably elicit information and informed opinion from native speakers. Structural inaccuracy is rarely the major cause of misunderstanding. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Without searching for words or phrases, an S-3 uses the language clearly and relatively naturally to elaborate concepts freely and make ideas easily understandable to native speakers. Errors occur in low-frequency and highly complex structures.

S-3+ GENERAL PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Is often able to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide range of sophisticated and demanding tasks.

Examples: Despite obvious strengths, may exhibit some hesitancy, uncertainty, effort, or errors that limit the range of language-use tasks that can be reliably performed. Typically, there is particular strength in fluency and one or more, but not all, of the following: has breadth of lexicon, including low- and medium-frequency items, especially socio-linguistic/cultural references and nuances of close synonyms; employs structural precision with sophisticated features that are readily, accurately, and appropriately controlled (such as complex modification and embedding in Indo-European languages); has discourse

competence in a wide range of contexts and tasks, often matching a native speaker's strategic and organizational abilities and expectations. Occasional patterned errors occur in low-frequency and highly-complex structures.

S-4 ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY

Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. An S-4's language usage and ability to function are fully successful. Organizes discourse well, employing functional rhetorical speech devices, native cultural references, and understanding. Language ability only rarely hinders him/her in performing any task requiring language; yet, an S-4 would seldom be perceived as a native. Speaks effortlessly and smoothly and is able to use the language with a high degree of effectiveness, reliability, and precision for all representational purposes within the range of personal and professional experience and scope of responsibilities. Can serve as an informal interpreter in a range of unpredictable circumstances. Can perform extensive, sophisticated language tasks, encompassing most matters of interest to well-educated native speakers, including tasks that do not bear directly on a professional specialty.

Examples: Can discuss in detail concepts that are fundamentally different from those of the target culture and make those concepts clear and accessible to the native speaker. Similarly, an S-4 can

understand the details and ramifications of concepts that are culturally or conceptually different from his/her own. Can set the tone of interpersonal official, semi-official, and non-professional verbal exchanges with a representative range of native speakers (in a range of varied audiences, purposes, tasks, and settings). Can play an effective role among native speakers in such contexts as conferences, lectures and debates on matters of disagreement. Can advocate a position at length, both formally and in chance encounters, using sophisticated verbal strategies. Can understand and reliably produce shifts of both subject matter and tone. Can understand native speakers of the standard and other major dialects in essentially any face-to-face interaction.

S-4+ ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Speaking proficiency is regularly superior in all respects, usually equivalent to that of a well-educated, highly articulate native speaker. Language ability does not impede the performance of any language-use task. However, an S-4+ would not necessarily be perceived as culturally native.

Examples: An S-4+ organizes discourse well, employing functional rhetorical speech devices, native cultural references and understanding. Effectively applies a native speaker's social and circumstantial knowledge. However, cannot sustain that performance under all circumstances. While an S-4+ has a wide range and control of structure, an occasional non-

native slip may occur. An S-4+ has a sophisticated control of vocabulary and phrasing that is rarely imprecise, yet there are occasional weaknesses in idioms, colloquialisms, pronunciation, cultural reference, or there may be an occasional failure to interact in a totally native manner.

S-5 FUNCTIONALLY NATIVE PROFICIENCY

Speaking proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker and reflects the cultural standards of the country where the language is natively spoken. An S-5 uses the language with complete flexibility and intuition, so that speech on all levels is fully accepted by well-educated native speakers in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary and idiom, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references. Pronunciation is typically consistent with that of well-educated native speakers of a non-stigmatized dialect.

Reading

In the following descriptions a standard set of text-types is associated with each level. The text-type is generally characterized in each descriptive statement.

The word "read," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, means that the person at a given skill level can thoroughly understand the communicative intent in the text-types described. In the usual case, the reader could be expected to make a full

representation, thorough summary, or translation of the text into English.

Other useful operations can be performed on written texts that do not require the ability to “read,” as defined above. Examples of such tasks which persons of a given skill level may reasonably be expected to perform are provided, when appropriate, in the descriptions.

R-0 NO PROFICIENCY

No practical ability to read the language. Consistently misunderstands or cannot comprehend at all.

R-0+ MEMORIZED PROFICIENCY

Can recognize all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or a character system. Able to read some or all of the following: numbers, isolated words and phrases, personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations. The above often interpreted inaccurately. Unable to read connected prose.

R-1 ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY

Sufficient comprehension to read very simple connected written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript. Can read either representations of familiar formulaic verbal exchanges or simple language containing only the highest frequency structural patterns and vocabulary, including shared international vocabulary items and cognates (when appropriate). Able to read and understand known language elements

that have been recombined in new ways to achieve different meanings at a similar level of simplicity. Texts may include simple narratives of routine behavior, highly predictable descriptions of persons, places or things; and explanations of geography and government such as those simplified for tourists. Some misunderstandings possible on simple texts. Can get some main ideas and locate prominent items of professional significance in more complex texts. Can identify general subject matter in some authentic texts.

R-1+ ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Sufficient comprehension to understand simple discourse in printed form for informative social purposes. Can read material such as announcements of public events, simple prose containing biographical information or narration of events, and straightforward newspaper headlines. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualized, but with difficulty in unfamiliar contexts. Can get some main ideas and locate routine information of professional significance in more complex texts. Can follow essential points of written discussion at an elementary level on topics in his/her special professional field.

In commonly taught languages, an R-1+ may not control the structure well. For example, basic grammatical relations are often misinterpreted, and temporal reference may rely primarily on lexical items as time indicators. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in

discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. May have to read materials several times for understanding.

R-2 LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY

Sufficient comprehension to read simple, authentic written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript on subjects within a familiar context. Able to read with some misunderstandings straightforward, familiar, factual material, but in general insufficiently experienced with the language to draw inferences directly from the linguistic aspects of the text. Can locate and understand the main ideas and details in material written for the general reader. However, persons who have professional knowledge of a subject may be able to summarize or perform sorting and locating tasks with written texts that are well beyond their general proficiency level. The R-2 can read uncomplicated, but authentic prose on familiar subjects that are normally presented in a predictable sequence which aids the reader in understanding. Texts may include descriptions and narrations in contexts such as news items describing frequently occurring events, simple biographical information, social notices, formulaic business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader. Generally, the prose that can be read by an R-2 is predominantly in straightforward/high-frequency sentence patterns. The R-2 does not have a broad active vocabulary (that is, which he/she recognizes immediately on sight), but is able to use contextual and

real-world cues to understand the text. Characteristically, however, the R-2 is quite slow in performing such a process. Is typically able to answer factual questions about authentic texts of the types described above.

R-2+ LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual material in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special professional interests. Is markedly more proficient at reading materials on a familiar topic. Is able to separate the main ideas and details from lesser ones and uses that distinction to advance understanding. The R-2+ is able to use linguistic context and real-world knowledge to make sensible guesses about unfamiliar material. Has a broad active reading vocabulary. The R-2+ is able to get the gist of main and subsidiary ideas in texts that could only be read thoroughly by persons with much higher proficiencies. Weaknesses include slowness, uncertainty, inability to discern nuance and/or intentionally disguised meaning.

R-3 GENERAL PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY

Able to read within a normal range of speed and with almost complete comprehension a variety of authentic prose material on unfamiliar subjects. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although it is not expected that an R-3 can comprehend thoroughly subject matter

which is highly dependent on cultural knowledge or which is outside his/her general experience and not accompanied by explanation. Text-types include news stories similar to wire service reports or international news items in major periodicals, routine correspondence, general reports, and technical material in his/her professional field; all of these may include hypothesis, argumentation, and supported opinions. Misreading rare. Almost always able to interpret material correctly, relate ideas, and “read between the lines,” (that is, understand the writers’ implicit intents in texts of the above types). Can get the gist of more sophisticated texts, but may be unable to detect or understand subtlety and nuance. Rarely has to pause over or reread general vocabulary. However, may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structure and low frequency idioms.

R-3+ GENERAL PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Can comprehend a variety of styles and forms pertinent to professional needs. Rarely misinterprets such texts or rarely experiences difficulty relating ideas or making inferences. Able to comprehend many socio-linguistic and cultural references. However, may miss some nuances and subtleties. Able to comprehend a considerable range of intentionally complex structures, low-frequency idioms, and uncommon connotative intentions; however, accuracy is not complete. The S-3+ is typically able to read with facility,

understand, and appreciate contemporary expository, technical, or literary texts that do not rely heavily on slang and unusual idioms.

R-4 ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY

Able to read fluently and accurately all styles and forms of the language pertinent to professional needs. The R-4’s experience with the written language is extensive enough that he/she is able to relate inferences in the text to real-world knowledge and understand almost all socio-linguistic and cultural references. Able to “read beyond the lines” (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment). Able to read and understand the intent of writers’ employment of nuance and subtlety. An R-4 can discern relationships among sophisticated written materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow unpredictable turns of thoughts readily in, for example, editorials, conjectural piece of writing, and literary texts in any subject matter area directed to the general reader. Can read essentially all materials in his/her special field, including official and professional documents and correspondence. Recognizes all professionally relevant vocabulary known to the educated non-professional native, although may have some difficulty with slang. Can read reasonably legible handwriting without difficulty. Accuracy is often nearly that of a well-educated native reader.

R-4+ ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY, PLUS

Nearly native ability to read and understand extremely difficult or abstract prose, a very wide variety of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, and slang. Strong sensitivity to and understanding of socio-linguistic and cultural references. Little difficulty in reading less than fully legible handwriting. Broad ability to “read beyond the lines” (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment) is nearly that of a well-read or well-educated native reader. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated native reader, but not equivalent.

R-5 FUNCTIONALLY NATIVE PROFICIENCY

Reading proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of the well-educated native reader. Can read extremely difficult and abstract prose; for example, general legal and technical as well as highly colloquial writings. Able to read literary texts, typically including contemporary avant-garde prose, poetry, and theatrical writing. Can read classical/archaic forms of literature with the same degree of facility as the well-educated, but non-specialist native. Reads and understands a wide variety of vocabulary and idioms, colloquialisms, slang, and pertinent cultural references. With varying degrees of difficulty, can read all kinds of handwritten documents. Accuracy of comprehension is equivalent to that of a well-educated native reader.

FSI Language Proficiency Testing

Notes to Prospective Examinees

The FSI Language Proficiency Test is designed to provide you and your employer with information about your speaking and reading ability in a foreign language. To assess this ability, you are asked to perform a series of communication and reading tasks. *The procedures you follow are the same for all examinees, regardless of the language being tested, the agency you are from, or where and how you may have acquired your skills.* The tasks that you are asked to perform during a test are representative of tasks performed by a broad range of U.S. government personnel living and working overseas. Each FSI Language Proficiency Test is comprised of two parts: the Speaking test and the Reading test. Your performance is rated according to the federal Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptions.

When you arrive for the test

You should plan to arrive at the assigned test location on time. The testing schedule is very full, and a testing team will wait only *ten minutes* past the scheduled time for an examinee to arrive. If you must cancel or change your appointment, you should advise Continuing Training and Testing ahead of time. Agencies are charged for employees who fail to show up for an appointment without canceling ahead of time.

A test administrator, called the Examiner, and a native speaker of the language being tested, called the Tester, comprise the testing team who will give you the test and evaluate your proficiency. Examiners receive extensive training and are certified by FSI to administer tests. Testers likewise are trained in sampling techniques, though occasionally FSI may use Testers from outside FSI to assist with tests.

You will be asked to fill in a DS-1354-A worksheet with some basic biographical information. This information is essential for processing your test results and submitting them to your agency. It is therefore very important that the information you put on the form be accurate; it is protected by FSI under the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974. You will be asked to indicate on the DS-1354-A Worksheet whether you permit your test to be recorded. We audio- or videotape language tests in order to have a complete record of your test performance. Although the testing team will be taking notes to provide feedback to you after the test is over, only a recording of the test makes a complete record of what transpired during the test. This is important in the event that there is a question about the test itself or your results. A test can be reviewed only if it has been recorded. Test tapes are normally kept for 30 days (six months for field tests administered at post).

During the test

It is important to remember that this is not a test of information or knowledge.

You cannot be downgraded because you lack knowledge about a specific subject covered in the test. During the Speaking test, the Tester will interact with you only in the language being tested. All interaction between you and the testing team during the Reading test will be in English. Since the testing team is only interested in your language proficiency, you need not divulge personal information, and you may answer questions any way you like.

The Speaking test has three sections: *PART 1* — You will have an everyday conversation in the language with the Tester about social, personal, and current events topics.

PART 2 — You will give an oral report on a subject that you select from choices given by the testing team, using English-language materials that suggest some information you can use in what you say. You may use that material as a guide, or you can draw on your own knowledge and experience about the subject. Afterward, you are expected to respond to follow-up discussion questions.

PART 3 — You will obtain information, fact and opinion from the Tester in the language on a subject which you select from several choices, and then report in English to the Examiner what you learn. This demonstrates your understanding and your ability to manage an interaction in accomplishing a specific task.

The Reading test has two sections. The tasks you are asked to perform are:

PART 1 — You will read quickly through several short written texts in the

language and then tell the testing team what the gist is (what the text is about generally) for each text. The texts in this section vary widely in subject matter and difficulty.

PART 2 — You will read in detail two (or more) longer articles that you select from several choices. You will give a detailed report of your understanding of the content of the articles. You may also be asked to provide a more detailed rendition of a part of the text.

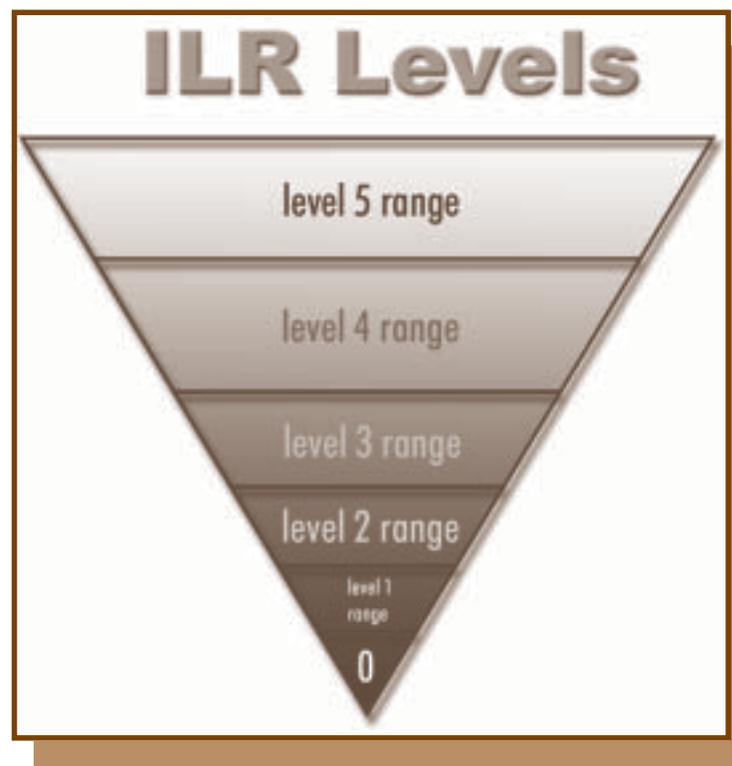
Each part of the test, speaking and reading, generally lasts about 45 minutes. The preparation periods for Part 2 of the Speaking test and both sections of the Reading test have time limits. You should plan to spend at least two hours at the testing site. If your ability in the language is limited, the test will take less time.

After the test

In most cases, the results will be discussed with you shortly after the test. If the testing team believe that further discussion and review of your performance is necessary to assure a fair rating, they will arrange a later time with you to give you the rating and feedback on your performance. Official written results, the form DS-1354, will be forwarded to your agency two weeks after you take the test. Currently, test reports are processed once a month. If your agency has an urgent need for official confirmation of your rating, your personnel or training officer may contact Continuing Training and Testing directly to obtain it.

Evaluating your performance

The testing team considers several dimensions in evaluating your test



performance. For the Speaking test, you are evaluated on your ability to understand in face-to-face interaction (comprehension); your ability to organize your language and present your ideas appropriately, effectively, and logically, both in interaction and in extended speech (discourse); your ability to use the grammatical and vocabulary features of the language in an accurate and appropriate manner (structure and lexicalization); and the ease with which you speak (fluency). For the Reading test, you are evaluated on your ability to derive overall meaning from a text (overall comprehension); your understanding the words used in the text (lexical comprehension) and of any contextual and implied meaning (discourse comprehension); your ability to navigate through the grammar (structural comprehension); and the ease with which you read (fluency).

The testing team compares your test performance with specific performance level descriptions for each of these factors. They put together a profile of your performance based on these descriptions, which is then matched to the description of the proficiency level that fits. You are given an 'S' (speaking) and 'R' (reading) score (e.g., S-1/R-1).

The proficiency levels are those described in the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptions. There are six base levels, 0 through 5. The level 5 represents language ability equivalent to that of a well-educated native speaker, whereas,

level 0 represents no usable proficiency. In instances where your performance may show characteristics of a higher proficiency level but is not consistently at the higher level, a '+' is added to the base proficiency level rating.

The ILR Skill Level Descriptions are available from Continuing Training and Testing. You are encouraged to become familiar with what the different skill levels mean, since many positions overseas are designated as requiring proficiency at a particular level. It is important to remember that these skill levels constitute a proficiency rating, not an achievement grade. That is, your score is based on your current ability in the language as demonstrated through samples elicited in the test alone, rather than on your training accomplishments or what you may know about the language.

A second opinion

If you feel that your test or your rating is somehow inaccurate or unfair, you may ask Continuing Training and Testing to conduct a formal review. A second testing team scores your test by listening to the tape without knowing what rating was assigned by the original testing team. The review process can result in a change in the rating, the offer of a retest, or confirmation of the original rating.

Most proficiency ratings are considered valid for five years. State employees may retest in a language six months after a previous test in that language, or after 100 hours of formal instruction.

To arrange for testing

Only federal government employees of the Executive Branch, and spouses or adult dependents who may be accompanying those employees on overseas assignments, are eligible to take the FSI Language Proficiency Test. Employees of the Department of State may contact FSI Continuing Training and Testing directly to make an appointment to take a test. Employees of all other agencies may schedule a test *only* through their appropriate training or personnel office. That office must have the authority to commit funds to pay for the test. Test appointments must be made at least two weeks in advance.

Getting ready

Since the FSI Language Proficiency Test assesses your ability to actually use the language, your best preparation is to do just that. Practice communicating with native speakers and reading authentic print materials in the language. Simply reviewing grammar or vocabulary, or listening to language learning tapes, is generally less helpful in improving test performance. Just before the test, you should try to do things that will help you reduce the anxiety that most of us normally feel in a test situation. A good night's sleep is recommended.

Testing Tips***Prior to the test***

- Rest well. Don't cram on grammar, verb conjugations, noun-verb agreements or idiomatic expressions. It is

too late to learn anything new. We do not test you on how much grammar or vocabulary you have mastered; instead, we would like to see how you can communicate in the language of the test. The trick is to maximize what you can do in speaking and understanding the language, no matter what your gaps maybe.

- Perhaps you should see a movie in the language of your test (if feasible), or go out with friends who speak the language of your upcoming test.
- Plan to leave home early, especially if you have to face the traffic in the D.C. area.
- Bring a bottle of water to carry with you to the testing room, if you like, ...but no dictionary or any other linguistic aids.
- Once you are in the Testing Unit, read all instructions carefully and don't hesitate to ask questions if you are not sure of any testing procedures. There will be several sets of instructions prior to and during the test.
- Get acquainted with your testing team: the examiner, who may or may not understand the language of the test, administers the test; the tester, a native speaker of the language of the test, interacts with you in that language.

Speaking Part I (Conversation)

- This part consists of a conversational exchange between you and the Tester. It lasts up to 12 minutes.
- Since the tester will assume that you are fluent in the language of the test,

- act as you would in any situation when you don't understand a native speaker: ask the tester to repeat, paraphrase or slow down.
- Try to converse clearly, give your opinion, talk about yourself or about the world, or your family, or the news.
 - The conversation part of the test is not an interrogation. Treat it as you would treat any conversation, by taking turns.
 - You may hear that proverbs or idiomatic expressions are safe bets for a good score. Be careful how you use them! If used correctly, idiomatic expressions may show that you "have a knack for the language." On the other hand, if you ... "beat in the bush" rather than around it, the opposite will be true.

Speaking Part II (Presentation)

- In this part of the test, you are asked to speak at length on one out of five possible topics. The topics concern the U.S. and will most certainly constitute the focus of conversations overseas. We refer to this part as "Presenting America." Choose a topic that interests you so that you can talk for 5-10 minutes (after five minutes preparation).
- Pay attention to the organization of your presentation: introduction of the subject, body of the presentation and conclusion are distinct parts that your tester would want to identify in your presentation.
- At the end of your presentation, the tester will ask questions about what

you said, or may engage you in a discussion or a debate.

- If you need concrete vocabulary that you don't know, try to paraphrase. The tester will not accept English.
- The conversation is not a question and answer exercise. We would like to see how well you can convey messages, give and receive information.

Note: In the first two parts of the Speaking test, your interaction with the tester takes place entirely in the language of the test.

Speaking Part III (Interview)

- In this last part of the Speaking test, you are asked to interview the tester in the language of the test on the topic of your choice, selected from five categories. You will be asked to report the information that the tester provides to the examiner, in English. There is no preparation time, just a minute to collect your thoughts.
- Ask precise questions.
- This is not a memory exercise. You may jot down what the tester tells you. The best technique is to interrupt the tester regularly when you have enough information to report. You will then ask another question, and so on.
- You may ask the tester to repeat something that was not clear to you or information that you forgot.
- Some examinees tell us that they never interview people overseas. That may be true, but in your daily life you may need to ask for information about the best restaurant, or

tennis club, or you may want to inquire about events, activities or opinions.

Note: In the third part of the Speaking test, you continue to interact with the tester in the language of the test, but also relate the information that you have collected to the examiner, in English.

Reading Part I (Reading for the Gist)

- You will be asked to read six short texts of different levels of complexity and difficulty in the language of the test.
- This is not a translation exercise. The testing team will ask you to tell them in English the subject matter, the genre and the general meaning of the texts that you were able to read, without going into much detail. This exercise is similar to glancing at a newspaper: scan quickly the main topics, then look at editorials, a movie review, a cartoon, anything that interests you.
- If you cannot understand all texts, don't get discouraged. It only means that you may not be able to read very difficult texts.
- The print is too small? We will enlarge it for you.

Reading Part II (Reading in Depth)

- You are offered a choice of five authentic texts in five different categories, of which you will be asked to choose one article.
- At the end of a preparation period of 7 minutes, you will be asked to present, in English, the content of the text, and supporting details. It is

a good idea to choose a text in a familiar domain.

- After this reading is completed, you will be asked to read a second text on a different topic. Either the testing team or you choose the second text. The same procedure as before applies.
- Feel free to jot down notes on the copy of the article that you select if that is helpful.

Note: At the end of either or both parts of the Reading test you may be asked to go to the text(s) and provide more information.

Evaluation, Scoring and Feedback

- This is the end of the test for you.
- The testing team members evaluate your performance that is based solely on the sample provided on the day of the test. It is not related to your training or any previous tests that you may have taken in the past.
- You are given a Speaking score and a Reading score on a scale of 0 to 5. In face-to-face or videoconference tests, the examiner will offer you a copy of the ILR Skill Level descriptions so that you can read the exact definitions for each score.
- You may request a detailed feedback on your performance and advice for improvement.

Do your best! Showing what you can do with any amount of language that you have mastered (in other words, showing off) is not only permitted, it is recommended.

Everything You Wanted to Know About Language Training in The State Department, but Didn't Know Whom to Ask

1. **Language Proficiency:** The ability to use a language to accomplish real-world purposes. The State Department uses the U.S. Government descriptions that define levels of proficiency on a scale from 0 to 5, for the skills of speaking and reading. These are expressed as, for example, S-2, R-3, etc. The “One-Level” is what may be thought of as courtesy-level or “survival”-type language ability; the “Two-level” is considered to be basic working proficiency; the “Three-Level” is general professional proficiency; the “Four-Level” is advanced professional proficiency; and the “Five-level” is the equivalent of the knowledge and abilities of a well-educated native speaker of a language. The “scores” from official Foreign Service Institute tests are expressed in terms of these proficiency levels.
2. **Typology of Languages and Training:** The Foreign Service Institute characterizes languages into three general categories:
 - “World”: generally the Western European languages that are closely related to English, e.g., French, German, Portuguese, Swedish;
 - “Hard”: languages more distant from English, e.g., Albanian, Finnish, Hindi, Russian, Thai, Vietnamese; and
 - “Superhard”: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean.

In summary, full-length world language Basic courses are 23 or 24 weeks long (German is 30 weeks) and have several start-dates throughout the year. “Hard” language courses are 44 weeks and have their main starts twice a year—in September and February. By special arrangement, these languages (and the “superhard” languages, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, when the goal is less than S-3/R-3) may also start at other times listed in the FSI Schedule of Courses. Full “superhard” language courses with an S-3/R-3 goal are 88 weeks, with the second year usually taken at an FSI overseas school. For all languages, shorter amounts of training may be assigned when the proficiency objective is less than S-3/R-3. FSI also offers “FAST” (Familiarization and Short-Term) courses of 7 or 8 weeks duration. These serve as survival-level training for people who are not in Language Designated Positions or who do not have time for the longer courses.

3. Language Designated Positions (LDP): Many positions require the use of language as a fundamental tool in carrying out the incumbent's role at the U.S. mission. These are designated by the Department as "LDPs," and they are described in terms of the needed proficiency level, e.g., Russian S-3/R-3, Spanish S-3/R-2, etc. Generally, members of the Foreign Service who are assigned to those positions are first assigned to an appropriate amount of language training to meet the required level. The State Department must report to Congress each year on the percentage of these positions that are filled by officers at the critical level. This is called the "compliance rate." Under some circumstances, usually because of an urgent need for the assignee to proceed to post, a "language waiver" may be requested by a post or bureau and granted by the Bureau of Human Resources, though this is strongly discouraged.
4. Eligibility for Language Training: FSI is authorized to train government employees and eligible family members only. With the exception of the Early Morning program, language training is directly assignment-related, either to fulfill an LDP or for a familiarization with the language and culture of the post of assignment. Officers may not simply "sign up" to take full-time language training. They must be assigned by an appropriate assignments officer. Preexisting knowledge of a language is taken into account to determine the length of training required. A list of FSI's experience and recommendations for training lengths in the Basic courses by language is available. Resources permitting, refresher or brush-up training is also available to a limited degree in preparation for a (repeat) assignment to a given language area. There is no direct charge to bureaus for language training of State Department employees or their eligible family members. Other government personnel and their families may train at FSI on a tuition-paying basis.
5. Early Morning Language Training: A program of two 17-week semesters offered each fall and spring, from 7:30-8:40 every morning. This training is available for individuals interested in beginning language learning, brush-up, maintenance, or for those who have or anticipate a job-related requirement for language, but who can not take full-time training. Early Morning is offered in a small number of languages in a limited number of classes. A Department Notice announces the details of the program before each semester.

6. **Language Proficiency of Applicants:** Applicants for the Foreign Service take the Foreign Service Entrance Examination, a written test offered periodically. Those who attain a high enough score on the written test are eligible for an oral assessment that may qualify them to be placed on a selection register. Once on that register, they are also eligible to take a foreign language assessment which is a speaking-only telephone test that determines whether they are at a “threshold level,” i.e., at least S-2 in a “hard” language or S-3 in a “world language.” These tests are known as “BEX” (Board of Examiners) tests. Those who have passed the Foreign Service written and oral exams “move higher on the selection register” by demonstrating the attainment of a threshold level in a language test. Greater credit is given for proficiency in certain critical languages.
7. **Language “Probation”:** Junior Foreign Service Officers have five years from date of entry to achieve tenure. One component of that is the removal of the so-called “language limitation,” otherwise known as language probation. This is removed by testing at the S-3/R-3 level in a world language, S-2/R-2 in a hard language, or S2/R-X (i.e., reading score is not relevant) in a language with a complex writing system, e.g., Chinese, Armenian, Khmer, etc. The full list of languages is available from the Entry Level Division of the Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA/EL).
8. **Junior Officer Language Training:** Junior officers typically are assigned to training either in view of an upcoming assignment and/or to remove the language limitation. For world languages, assignments are generally up to 24 weeks with the goal of S-3/R-3. For hard languages assignments are 23 to 36 weeks with the goal of at least S-2/R-2 (S-2/R-1 in superhard languages). Assignments of up to 44 weeks may be made when Washington training time before departure permits.
9. **Other “Gatekeeping” Roles of Language:** In order to be promoted (“cross the threshold”) into the Senior Foreign Service, officers must have achieved a score of S-3/R-3 in one language at some time during their careers.
10. **Training for Eligible Family Members:** Family members 18 years of age and older who accompany employees to an overseas assignment may take language training at FSI on a space-available basis in FSI’s Basic, FAST, or Early Morning courses.

11. **Venue of Language Training:** Virtually all language training provided to Foreign Service Officers of the Department of State takes place at FSI/Washington at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center. In rare cases of highly intermittent or seldom-taught languages, other venues such as private schools or overseas facilities may be used (see #12 below). World languages are almost never taught anywhere but at FSI. FSI has overseas field schools for the second-year of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Most State Department employees who study at the overseas schools have taken the first year at FSI/Washington. Some Early Morning classes are taught at the Harry S. Truman Main State building.
12. **In-Country Training:** Under very rare circumstances, usually for cases where members of a tandem couple are assigned to LDPs, but where those assignments do not begin simultaneously, the Department may sponsor language training in the host country for family-friendly reasons. The relevant regional bureau, the Career Development and Assignments Office (HR/CDA), FSI, and the Executive Office of the Human Resources Bureau (HR/EX) coordinate these assignments.
13. **Language Incentive Program:** To encourage the acquisition and use of hard languages, there is a complicated but generous program of language incentive payments (LIP) administered by the Department of State. Details are available in the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook (3 FAM 3170 and 3 FAH-1 H-3170). In brief, members of the Foreign Service serving at a post whose language is on the Incentive Language List are eligible for a salary bonus equal to 10% of the salary of an FS-1, Step 1, if they have a score of S-3/R-3 in the language. The bonus is 15% of that salary level for an S-4/R-4. These payments are not dependent on the incumbent being in a Language Designated Position. There are other additional bonuses and incentives for language improvement while at post and for repeat tours using the same language. Details are in the FAM and FAH. Duration of the validity of scores is also available in those documents.
14. **“TIC Waiver”:** An additional language incentive is the waiver of one year of the “time-in-class” (TIC) limitation for promotion purposes for a full-length course in a hard language, i.e., a 44-week course. A second TIC waiver may be available for the additional 44 weeks in the full second-year

course of “superhard” languages. The determination of eligibility for these waivers rests with the Office of Personnel Evaluation in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR/PE).

15. **Language Testing Policy:** FSI’s oral and reading proficiency test is the only official test for the purposes of all language-related personnel entailments, i.e., probation, language incentive bonuses, LDP compliance, and senior-threshold. Most language testing is done in Washington; however, tests may be requested while an employee is serving abroad. Once they have been officially requested by cable to FSI, these tests are administered at posts under the proctorship of a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, and the tapes are sent back to Washington for scoring. There is also a growing capability to use digital video conferencing to conduct tests at posts directly from FSI. Tests may be repeated after an interval of either six months or one hundred hours of formal language instruction. There is an official mechanism for appealing test results; requests for review are done in writing to the Language Testing Unit at FSI/Washington.
16. **Post Language Programs:** Language training programs at overseas posts are sponsored by the posts, using their regular bureau allotments. Some posts make arrangements for State Department employees to receive reimbursement — partial or total — for privately arranged training; others offer formal classes or other programs directly at the posts. Under a congressional initiative, FSI has sponsored supplemental funding to enhance post language programs through innovative approaches such as immersions, field trips with a language purpose, multimedia instructional materials, language coaching, and more. FSI, in partnership with the bureaus and posts, provides pedagogical and practical guidance to modernize and vary the language learning experience at post.
17. **Distance Learning Programs:** FSI’s School of Language Studies is continuing to develop courses to be delivered via electronic media—both CD-ROM and online—to those who can not study in Washington. These “students” may be based domestically or overseas. There are currently thirteen distance language learning courses with more under development.

Expected Achievements Charts

Approximate Learning Expectations at the Foreign Service Institute

Students at FSI: The average language student at FSI is around 40 years old and already knows some foreign languages. S/he has typically completed at least the equivalent of a Master's degree.

Students are government employees preparing for an assignment in a country where the language is spoken, or are adult dependents of employees. Students enroll in training at the official request of their government agencies.

Learning conditions: Language learning at FSI is highly intensive, involving at least 22 classroom hours each week and 2-3 hours per day of directed self-study. Class size is a maximum of six, typically fewer.

Learning goals: The most common course goal is for the student to achieve

a tested proficiency rating of "General Professional Proficiency" in speaking and reading the language (S-3/R-3 on the Interagency Language Roundtable scale). Listening proficiency is assessed during the Speaking test, but not discretely tested per se. Writing is taught as a means of improving reading and speaking and is not tested. Classes may be extended in some languages for students who fail to achieve their proficiency goal.

Notes: *All estimates in this table assume that the student is a native speaker of English with no prior knowledge of the language to be learned. It is also assumed that the student has very good or better aptitude for classroom learning of foreign languages; less skilled language learners typically take longer. Although languages are grouped into general "categories" of difficulty for native English speakers, within each category some languages are more difficult than others.*

Language "categories"	Weeks to achieve Goal	Class hours to achieve goal
Category I: (World) Languages closely cognate with English. French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Norwegian, Afrikaans, etc.	23-24	575-600
Category II: (Hard) Languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English, e.g., Albanian, Amharic, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Finnish, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Khmer, Latvian, Nepali, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Zulu, etc.	44	1100
Category III: (Superhard) Languages which are exceptionally difficult for native English speakers: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean	88 (2 nd year may be in the country)	2200
Other languages: Good language learners typically require at least 30 weeks (750 class hours) to achieve a 3/3 from zero in German; learners of Indonesian, Malay and Swahili require 36 weeks (900 class hours).		

Category I (“World Languages”): Languages closely cognate with English:

Afrikaans (23 weeks)	Italian (24 weeks)	Spanish (24 weeks)
Danish (23 weeks)	Norwegian (23 weeks)	Swedish (23 weeks)
Dutch (23 weeks)	*Portuguese (24 weeks)	
French (24 weeks)	*Romanian (23 weeks)	

Category II (“Hard Languages”): Languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English. This list is not exhaustive:

Albanian	*Hungarian	Serbian
Amharic	Icelandic	*Sinhala
Armenian	Kazakh	Slovak
Azerbaijani	*Khmer	Slovenian
Bengali	Kurdish	Tagalog
Bosnian	Kyrgyz	*Tamil
Bulgarian	*Lao	*Thai
Burmese	Latvian	Turkish
Belarussian	Lithuanian	Turkmen
Croatian	Macedonian	Ukrainian
Czech	Malayalam	Urdu
*Estonian	*Mongolian	Uzbek
*Finnish	Nepali	*Vietnamese
*Georgian	Pashto	Xhosa
Greek	Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajiki)	Zulu
Hebrew	Polish	
Hindi	Russian	

Category III (“Superhard Languages”): Languages that are exceptionally difficult for native English speakers:

Arabic
Cantonese
Mandarin Chinese
Japanese
*Korean

Other languages:

German (30 weeks)
Indonesian (36 weeks)
Malay (36 weeks)
Swahili (36 weeks)
Tetum (36 weeks)

* Language names preceded by asterisks are typically somewhat more difficult for native English speakers to learn to read and speak than others within the same category.

List of useful SLS web links

School of Language Studies web site

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/>

Language Departments

http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/Language_Dept_Page/index.htm

Continuing Training and Testing

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/ctt.htm>

Language Skill Level Descriptions

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/ltu/ilr.asp?page=ilr>

Distance Language Learning

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/plp/distance.asp?page=online>

Out & About in [city] series

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/plp/content.asp?page=outabout>

Research, Evaluation, and Development

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/Re&d/default.htm>

Post Language Program Talk, online discussion forum

<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sls/plp/plotalk.htm>

2001 State 151934, 2001 State 165022, and 2003 State 263523

2001 State 151934
R 241728Z SEP 01
UNCLAS STATE 151934

INFORM CONSULS, FOR ALL STATE EMPLOYEES, FOR D/SO PASS M

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: APER

SUBJECT: BIDDING INSTRUCTIONS ON ARABIC LANGUAGE PROGRAM

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS: THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE
BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL FULL-TIME STATE EMPLOYEES.

Bidders in the summer 2002 assignments cycle are permitted to bid on two-year Arabic language training without having an onward assignment determined in advance. This program was announced in 99 State 102789, and is open only to tenured Foreign Service Generalists of grades FO-02, FO-03, and FO-04. Due to the years of reduced hiring and budget restrictions, the Department was not able to maintain its pool of Arabic language speakers. It is expected that two employees will be selected for this program in the 2002 bidding cycle. Selected officers will be assigned to first-year Arabic training at NFATC, and second-year training at the Tunis Regional Language School. HR/DCA and NEA are committed to finding an appropriate language-designated position for the graduating officers. Graduates will be expected to serve a minimum of two years at an Arabic-speaking post immediately following the training. The Arabic program does not count as a core bid. Bids should be submitted as follows:

&TRAINING/348062/TUNISFSSCH/93000020/NEW/0802/H;

POWELL

2001 State 165022
VZCZCF SO305
RR RUEHFSI
DE RUEHC #5022 2671735
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 241728Z SEP 01
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS
SPECIAL EMBASSY PROGRAM
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 6701
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 2417
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA 2759
RUEHFN/AMEMBASSY FREETOWN 0870
RUEH NJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 9817
RUSBPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3387
BT

UNCLAS STATE 165022

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: APER

SUBJECT: CHINESE LANGUAGE PROGRAM FOR SUMMER 2002
ASSIGNMENTS CYCLE

REF: (A)STATE 009092, (B)STATE 159799

FOR HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICERS: THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE
BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FOREIGN SERVICE GENERALISTS.

1. The new Chinese language program announced in ref tel A has been extended to the summer 2002 assignments cycle, and is again available to tenured, Foreign Service generalists at mid-level grades FO-04 through FO-02.
2. Those eligible officers interested in undertaking a two-year course of Chinese (first year at NFATC and the second year in Taipei or Beijing) should contact

their CDO's. Officers selected for this program will be given an assignment to FSI long-term training without/without a confirmed onward assignment. HR/CDA and EAP will commit to finding an appropriate onward assignment to a Chinese-Mandarin language-designated position for the graduating officer (preferably at-grade and in cone), based on Service need. Interested officers should bear in mind that the Department will expect graduates of the program to serve, at a minimum, the full tour-of-duty at the onward assignment (either two or three years, depending on the tour-of-duty for that post).

3. Officers who achieve a CM 3/3 rating at the end of their study will be eligible for 10% incentive language pay per 3 FAM. Hardship differential for posts in China and Taiwan ranges from 0 (Hong Kong) to 25% (Chengdu and Shenyang). Officers who commit to a three-year assignment at Consulate General Chengdu or Shenyang will also be eligible for the 15% Service Need Differential (SND). Further information on the pros and cons of serving in China may be found in reftel B.

3. The Chinese language program does not count as a core bid. Bids should be submitted as follows:

— &TRAINING/330501/BEIJING/93000017/VACANT/0803/H;

— or

&TRAINING/330230/AITTAIPEI/77500000/VACANT/0803/H;

4. Officers selected will be required to obtain full medical clearances for themselves and all accompanying family members prior to begin the first year of Chinese language training at NFATC.

5. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
POWELL

2004 STATE 279943
VZCZCFSO794
RR RUEHFSI
DE RUEHC #9943/01 2732252
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 302240Z SEP 03
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS
SPECIAL EMBASSY PROGRAM
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 9456
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8771
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 4759
RUESKT/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 8309
BT

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 279943
INFORM CONSULS, FOR ALL STATE EMPLOYEES, ROME PASS MFO FOR
MANAGEMENT OFFICERS: THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO
THE ATTENTION OF ALL FULL-TIME STATE EMPLOYEES.

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: APER
SUBJECT: OUT-YEAR WORLD LANGUAGE PROGRAM FOR SUMMER 2004
BIDDERS

REF: STATE 263523

THIS TELEGRAM IS A REVISION OF REFTEL. CHANGES INCLUDE THE
EXCHANGE OF TITLES OF THE FS-02 AND FS-03 TUNIS POSITIONS, THE
CORRECTION OF THE LANGUAGE DESIGNATION ON THE FS-01 LIMA
RSO POSITION FROM PY 2/2 TO QB 2/2, AND THE ADDITION OF AN FS-
03 CONSULAR POSITION IN MONTREAL.

1. Due to the years of reduced hiring and budget restrictions, the Department has not been able to maintain its pool of world language speakers. Other than during entry-level training, generalists and specialists often find that the lack of time between assignments prevents the chance to study a world language. Bureaus find it hard to attract language-qualified bidders to differential/hard-to-fill posts and

either take lengthy gaps in key positions or cut language training, both of which eventually undermine post operations. In order to address these issues, the Department created the Out-year World Language Program. This cable announces and describes in detail the Out-year World Language Program for the 2004 summer cycle.

2. PURPOSE OF PROGRAM: The Out-year World Language Program addresses the two problems by: a) offering tenured mid-career employees an opportunity (and sufficient time) to learn a world language, ultimately expanding the number of posts for which they can compete later; and b) providing bureaus with a method for easing staffing gaps and timing problems in language-designated positions at posts that do not attract enough bidders.

3. POSTS AND POSITIONS SELECTED: Bureaus have identified the positions listed below for the program. For specifics on each post, check the Bidding Research Tools, which are available on the HR Web Site at http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/cda/bidding_research.html. Most posts are 15-percent-differential and above. A few other posts are included because they, nonetheless, have language-designated positions that are historically hard to fill. The bureaus and HR/CDA tried to include a variety of positions to make this opportunity available to as many generalists and specialists as possible. The timing of position turnover does not allow every position to be included in the program.

4. FOR 2004 BIDDERS: Bids on the 2005 positions identified below for which bidder is at-grade/in-cone will count as core bids, and bids on positions in the differential posts count as fair share bids. In addition, bids on one-grade stretch positions at posts with a differential of at least 15 percent can also count as core bids. Bids on positions for which a bidder is not at-grade/in-cone will be considered, but most do not count as a core or fair share bids unless the bidder is a recipient of a 2003 Selection Board MSI or is currently serving at a 15% or higher differential post. For more details, see "The 2004 Open Assignment Cycle Instructions on Bidding and Assignments," section 1.a. on Core Bids and section 1.d. on Out-year World Language Assignments at the following link: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/CDA/2004/2004%20Bidding%20Instructions.pdf>.

5. FOR 2005 TRANSFEREES: The program is designed to allow employees to learn a world language. However, as with out-year hard language positions, bids will be considered from candidates with a summer 2005 TED who already have the language proficiency required for the position. If you are interested, please contact your CDO.

6. EXTENSION OF INCUMBENTS: Because we hope to make assignments to these 2005 positions by early 2004, the usual May 15, 2004, deadline for deciding whether to extend is too late. While we are trying to create an opportunity for 2004 bidders, current incumbents should not be disadvantaged. Employees in the positions listed below must formally request an extension-immediately - the deadline is November 1, 2003, with post and bureau concurrence. Bureaus can substitute an equivalent language-designated, mid-level position from the same post or another 15-percent-or-higher differential post if the incumbent in any given position extends.

7. TRANSFER TIMING: The exact timing and training schedule will be worked out for each employee assigned. The general scenario will be to complete your current assignment on schedule, take home leave, report to a fall bridge assignment in the Department, most likely in the bureau of the onward assignment, and begin language training in early 2004. In some cases, it may be mutually acceptable to you and your current post to extend for a few months to facilitate timing. Keep in mind that, as with other language designated positions, language training may not begin unless the employee is medically cleared for the post. One advantage of the Out-year World Language Program is that there is more time flexibility, and it is possible to build a schedule which will allow for a timely 2005 arrival at the new post. Include any of these positions with your other 2004 bids. These positions are also incorporated into the 2004 eBid listings and are identified with the remark "OYWL Program."

GRADE POST	TITLE	ORG/POS NUM	TED	LDP
FS-01				
Lima	RSO	313601/56189000	01/2005	QB 3/3
Rabat	MGMT OFF	345601/50200001	08/2005	FR 3/3
FS-02				
Luanda	MGMT	350601/50004016	09/2005	PY 3/3
Sao Paulo	RSO	310612/56101000	01/2005	PY 2/2
Tunis	CONS OFF	348001/30018004	09/2005	FR 3/3
FS-03				
Caracas	ISO	314001/55600000	02/2005	QB 2/2
Maputo	IPO	355801/55012005	09/2005	PY 2/2
Maputo	FMM	355801/52034002	11/2005	PY 2/2
Montreal	CONS OFF	316004/31063000	12/2004	FR 3/3
Prt-au-Prince	IPO	312401/55046000	06/2005	FR 2/2
Tunis	ECON/COMM	348001/20005004	08/2005	FR 3/3
FP-04				
Managua	ISO	313001/55145001	06/2005	QB 2/2
FP-05				
Prt-au-Prince	OMS DCM	312401/00003001	10/2005	FR 2/2
Sao Paulo	OMS PO	310612/00076000	08/2005	PY 2/2
FP-06				
Managua	OMS POL	313001/10069000	11/2005	QB 2/2
Prt-au-Prince	OMS ECON	312401/20051000	03/2005	FR 2/2
Prt-au-Prince	OMS POL	312401/10033000	07/2005	FR 2/2
Prt-au-Prince	OMS RSO	312401/56079000	06/2005	FR 2/2

8. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
 POWELL
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